MARVEL MASTERWORKS®
THE MIGHTY THOR®
VOLUME 14

THE MIGHTY THOR Nos. 229-241

GERRY CONWAY & JOHN BUSCEMA

WITH RICH BUCKLER & SAL BUSCEMA

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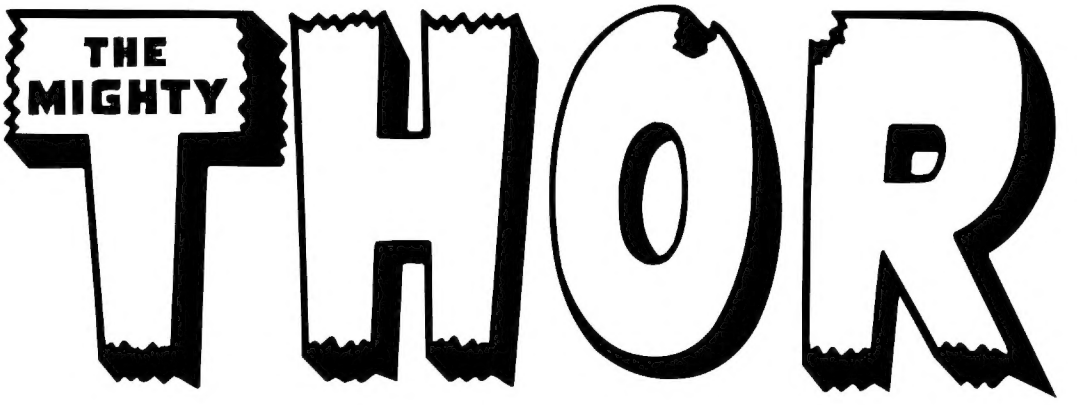

VOLUME 14

COLLECTING

THE MIGHTY THOR Nos. 229-241

GERRY CONWAY • JOHN BUSCEMA

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NOS. 229-241

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LOOKING BACKWARD 2015-1974
(WITH APOLOGIES TO EDWARD BELLAMY)
BY GERRY CONWAY

"The past is a foreign country," L.P. Hartley said in his novel, *The Go-Between*. "They do things differently there."

Like the protagonist of Hartley's book, picking through the memories of my past, trying to assemble a coherent picture of the time and place when the stories contained within this current volume were written, I find myself in the presence of familiar strangers. I know that face; that voice stirs a recollection; those words, I've heard them before, and if I try hard enough, if I reach deep enough, I'm sure I'll soon decode the language that stranger is speaking…

But I'm kidding myself. The past isn't just a foreign country: it's a country separated from the present by an unbridgeable ocean called memory, an ocean as dark and deep and as unfathomable as any of the Seven Seas that confronted the daring mariners of the ancient world.

Okay, I'm stretching a metaphor. I'm also hitting the pretension button pretty hard on my word processor.

(Or I would be, if I were using a word processor. That's a technology that didn't exist when these stories were written, and one that's already long obsolete. Which is one way to give you some perspective on just how far back into the past I'm attempting to look here. Put another way: When I go to conventions and meet fans who read my Thor stories as kids, sometimes they introduce me to their grandchildren.)

If I'm honest with myself, and honest with you, dear reader, my memory of the exact circumstances surrounding the writing of each and every one of the tales in this collection is a little, shall we say, murky.

Forty-one years, after all, is a very long time.

However, even if I can't tell you exactly what prompted me to plot the incoherent mess that is the first story sequence in this *Marvel Masterworks* edition (what on *earth* was I thinking?), I can give you a bit of background for the series of stories as a whole. So that's what I'll try to do.

I was twenty-one years old, soon to be married, living large in New York City, about to publish my second novel, full of piss and vinegar (I have no idea what that means, but it's something people used to say about arrogant and self-confident kids like me) with more money in my pocket than sense in my head. I was writing a lot (probably too much if the first few stories in this volume are any indication) and writing mostly by the seat of my pants, making it up as I went along—like Indiana Jones, but without the white horse. I was on top of my game (I thought) and pretty sure I was the Heir Apparent to the Marvel editorial throne if and when Roy Thomas should ever choose to leave it. I was a verifiable Boy Wonder (I was writing three of Marvel's top comics—*The Amazing Spider-Man*, *Fantastic Four* and *The Mighty Thor*) and the world was my oyster. (Something else people used to say, again, for reasons that escape me.)

And then it all came slowly crashing down.

Roy Thomas abdicated the editorial throne.

I wasn't anointed in his place.

And like the Boy Wonder I was (emphasis on "boy") I went into a slow-boiling pout that eventually led me to quit Marvel and take all my marbles (not to mention my football) over to DC Comics, where they knew how to treat Boy Wonders with some respect. (Unless they're named Jason Todd, but that's another story.)

Where was I?

Oh, right. Past: foreign country. Memory: dark, deep and unfathomable.

Memoirs? Pick one set: dishonest and self-serving, or truthful and embarrassing.

I seem to lean toward the second option in these introductions (though I admit I've done my share of the first, at times). So, the truth is, the stories contained here were written during a difficult time in my career, when I was trying (and failing) to envision a future for myself at Marvel that didn't involve me wearing an editorial crown and wielding an editorial scepter.

Oddly enough, I think my self-imposed angst actually worked to the benefit of the material.

Like I've mentioned, the first story sequence in this collection is a mess. I have no idea what I was trying to do. The suicides, the mysterious all-black shadow figure, the enemy called "Fear"—it's incomprehensible to me now. I was embarrassed to re-read it. I was terrified that the rest of the stories that followed would be as bad or worse and that I'd have to resort to some fancy say-nothing-while-smiling-and-tap-dancing-frantically literary hand waving. But then I kept reading, and, son of a gun, right around the time that things got all out of whack for me in what we kiddingly call The Real World, the stories themselves picked up quite nicely.

Funny how that works out. It's happened to me since during other personal crises. My outer world collapses and my inner world explodes creatively. Not a great way to live, but it does produce some quality writing in my case, apparently.

And the last of my Thor stories are, I think, of a reasonable quality—at least, compared to that awful opening salvo of I-don't-know-what-happened.

Starting with the return of the Firelord in *The Mighty Thor* #232, the storylines become more interesting (I think) and the visuals much tighter and clearer. Some of that has to do with John Buscema returning (no criticism intended of Rich Buckler, who does some very fine work here, particularly in #230). John and I worked well together as a team on *Thor*, and I'm pretty sure I missed his wise and steady hand the previous months. Many writers are only as good as the artists they collaborate with, and at that point in my career, I probably was one of them. John was an artist who brought out the best in me as a plotter and a visual storyteller. (Ross Andru and José-Luis Garcia-López were two others.) The proof is in the story and visual ambition of the Asgard-Earth War, the Kamo Tharnn sequence and the concluding Troll War storyline that

brought my run on *Thor* to a close. John's layouts and storytelling here are some of the best work he gave to Thor, and I couldn't have asked for a better (unplanned) send-off.

While I'm embarrassed by the first few issues in this collection, I'm pretty proud of the way I finished. The kid who wrote these stories may have been arrogant and self-tormenting, he may have had a lot to learn (and the man he eventually became still does), but every now and then he surprises me by coming up with a cool idea (Loki imprisons all earth's super heroes in force fields just so he can force Thor into leading the U.S. Army into battle against an invading host of Asgard; nice) and even a few well-turned phrases. Some interesting character situations (sadly left undeveloped after I left) such as Odin's journey of humility in a California farm commune, or Sif's self-sacrificing quest to save Jane Foster's life (which admittedly went on too long) strike me as intriguing even now, forty years later.

Forty-*one* years later.

Wow.

The past *is* a foreign country. The language is different. The culture is alien. The people look like us but live in another world.

We see the past from a distance. Through a haze. Part of that haze is forgetfulness, part of it is memory.

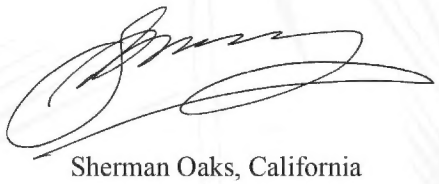
Was I really as frightened and arrogant and angry as I remember myself to have been when I wrote these stories? Honestly, I have no idea. There's no way to be sure. The only evidence that remains is the archaeology of these stories.

Dig through them, dust the fragments, examine the inscriptions.

Piece together what you will.

Find the stories within the stories.

Then tell them anew, and make them your own.



Sherman Oaks, California
2015

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THE MIGHTY
THOR
GOD OF THUNDER, NIGHT OF DOOM!

Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE MIGHTY THOR!™

"WHERE DARKNESS DWELLS, DWELL I!"

'TIS GOOD TO FLY ONCE MORE O'ER THE WORLD OF MEN.
METHINKS I HAVE BEEN TOO LONG IN FOREIGN PARTS--
FOR, VERILY, 'TIS ON EARTH THAT MY HEART DOTH RESIDE-- NOW, AND TILL THE END OF TIME!
GERRY CONWAY AUTHOR
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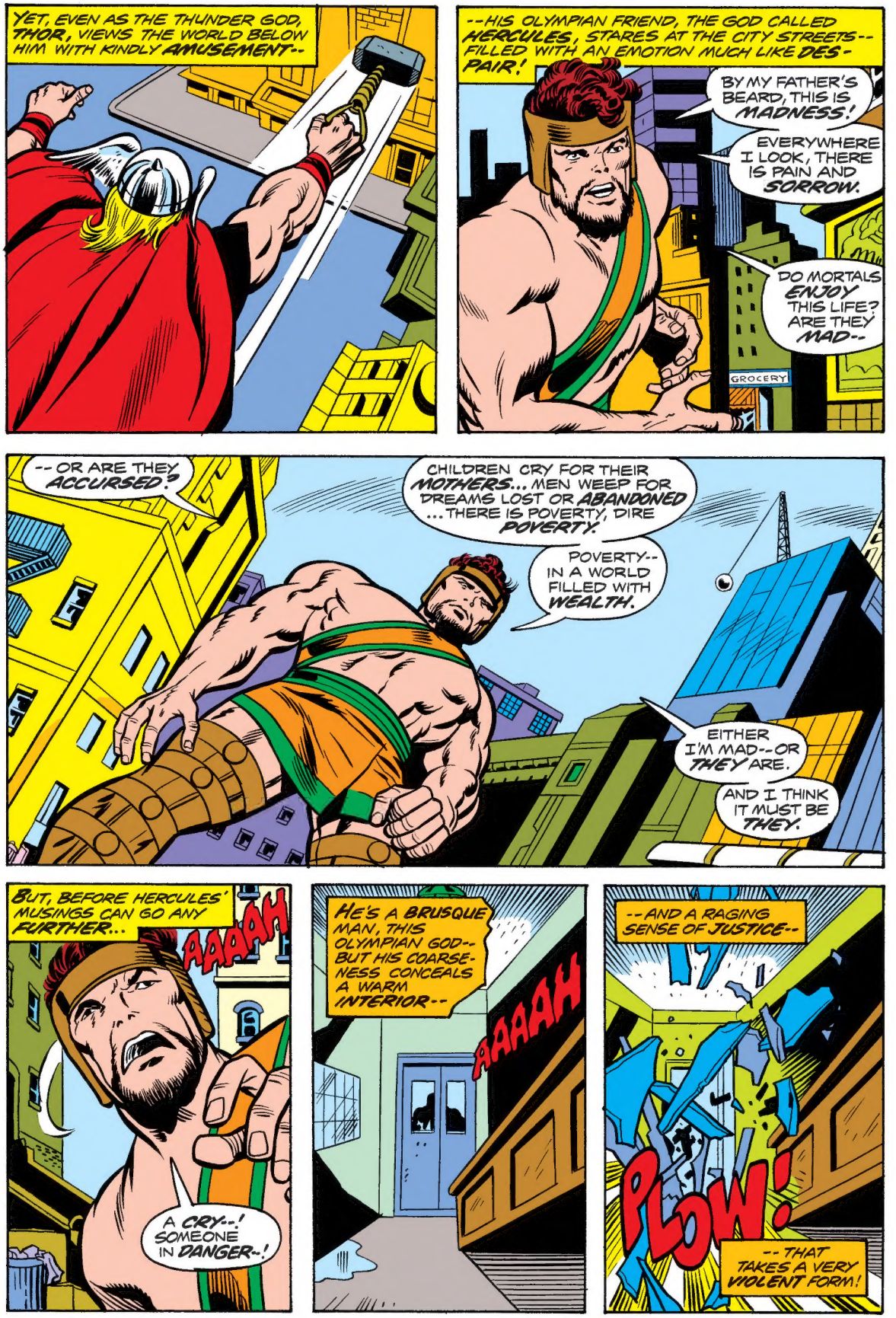
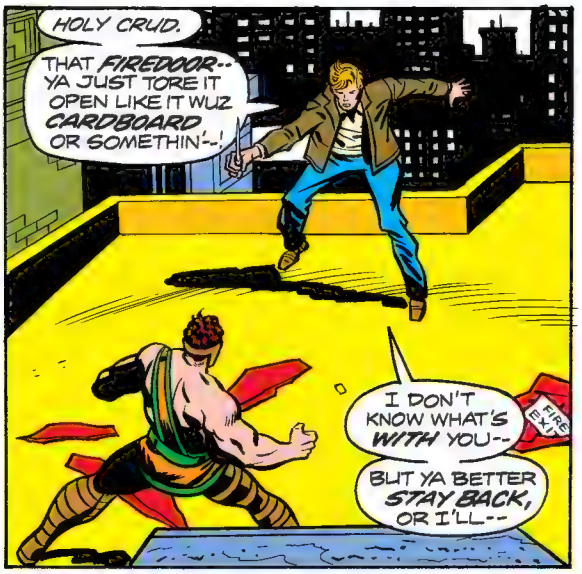
ROY THOMAS EDITOR

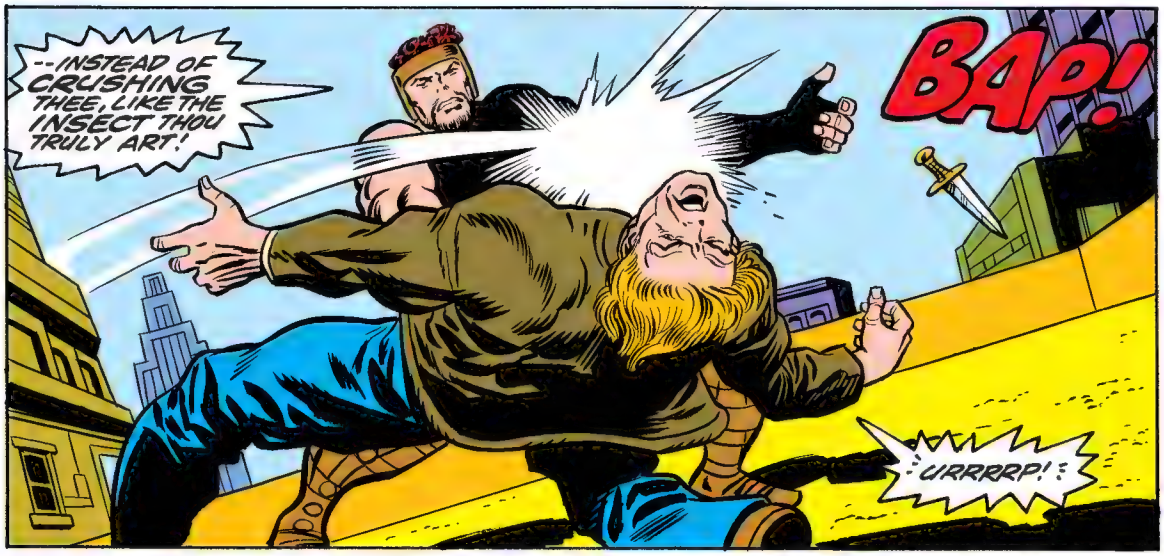

YET, EVEN AS THE THUNDER GOD, THOR, VIEWS THE WORLD BELOW HIM WITH KINDLY AMUSEMENT--
--HIS OLYMPIAN FRIEND, THE GOD CALLED HERCULES, STARES AT THE CITY STREETS--FILLED WITH AN EMOTION MUCH LIKE DES-PAIR!
BY MY FATHER'S BEARD, THIS IS MADNESS!
EVERYWHERE I LOOK, THERE IS PAIN AND SORROW.
DO MORTALS ENJOY THIS LIFE? ARE THEY MAD--
GROCERY
--OR ARE THEY ACCURSED?
CHILDREN CRY FOR THEIR MOTHERS... MEN WEEP FOR DREAMS LOST OR ABANDONED ...THERE IS POVERTY, DIRE POVERTY.
POVERTY--IN A WORLD FILLED WITH WEALTH.
EITHER I'M MAD--OR THEY ARE.
AND I THINK IT MUST BE THEY.
BUT, BEFORE HERCULES' MUSINGS CAN GO ANY FURTHER...
AAAAH
A CRY--! SOMEONE IN DANGER--!
HE'S A BRUSQUE MAN, THIS OLYMPIAN GOD--BUT HIS COARSE-NESS CONCEALS A WARM INTERIOR--
AAAAH
--AND A RAGING SENSE OF JUSTICE--
PLOW!
--THAT TAKES A VERY VIOLENT FORM!

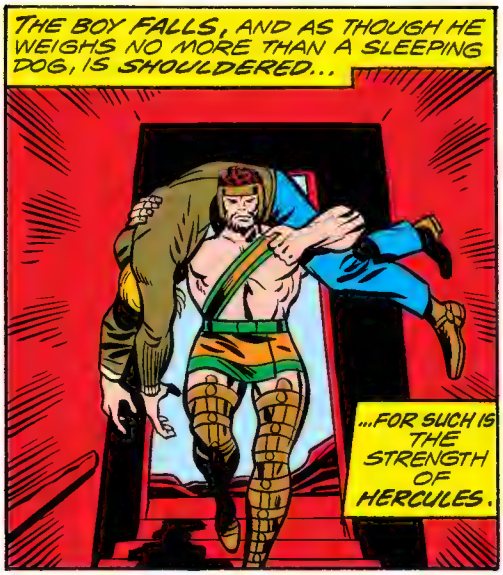
THE DOOR IS LOCKED -- BUT THAT DOESN'T MATTER.
THE DOOR HASN'T BEEN BUILT WHICH CAN WITHSTAND THE SON OF ZEUS--
RRIPPP!
--ESPECIALLY NOT WHEN HE'S ANGRY.
THE CRIES HAVE STOPPED.
IF I'M TOO LATE-- SOMEONE WILL PAY.
I SWEAR IT!
I'M TELLIN' YA, OLD MAN-- LET GO OF ME.
THE MONEY'S ALL I WANT, AN' I GOT THAT NOW-- SO I DON'T WANT TO HURT YOU, SEE--?
BUT IF YOU DON'T LET GO--
--I WILL!
DO WHAT YOU HAVE TO... I'M NOT AFRAID TO DIE... NOT WITH HIM ON MY SIDE...
HE PROMISED ME... PROMISED ME I'D LIVE IF I DIED...
SO KILL ME--I'M NOT AFRAID! I'M NOT A-
-AAAAAAAAAAAHHHH
CRAZY OLD COOT! I WARNED YA-- BUT YOU WOULDN'T LISTEN!
YOU WOULDN'T LISTEN!

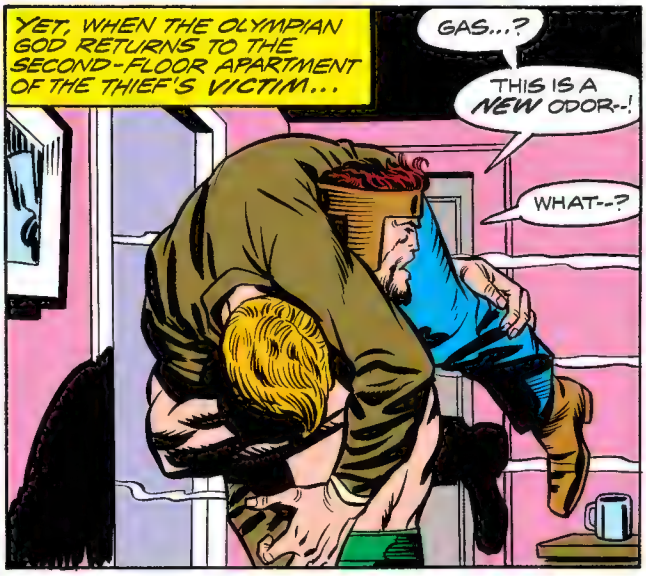
MORTAL, ART THOU INJURED?
THY ASSAILANT--DID HE--?
HE PROMISED--SAID I WOULDN'T DIE--
'TIS ONLY A SURFACE WOUND--A MERE CUT, NO MORE.
STILL--THE FOOL COULD HAVE KILLED THEE!
NEVER DIE--SAID--NEVER DIE--!
BE PATIENT, MORTAL. IN TIME, THY WOUND WILL HEAL.
YET--HAD IT BEEN DEEPER--
--THY MORTAL LIFE WOULD HAVE MET A MOST UNTIMELY END!
SUCH WASTE DOTH APPALL ME!
'TIS MADNESS--
FIRE EXIT
--BLIND, UNTHINKING MADNESS--AND, IN TRUTH--
--IT DOTH FIRE ME TO A RAGE!
SMASH!

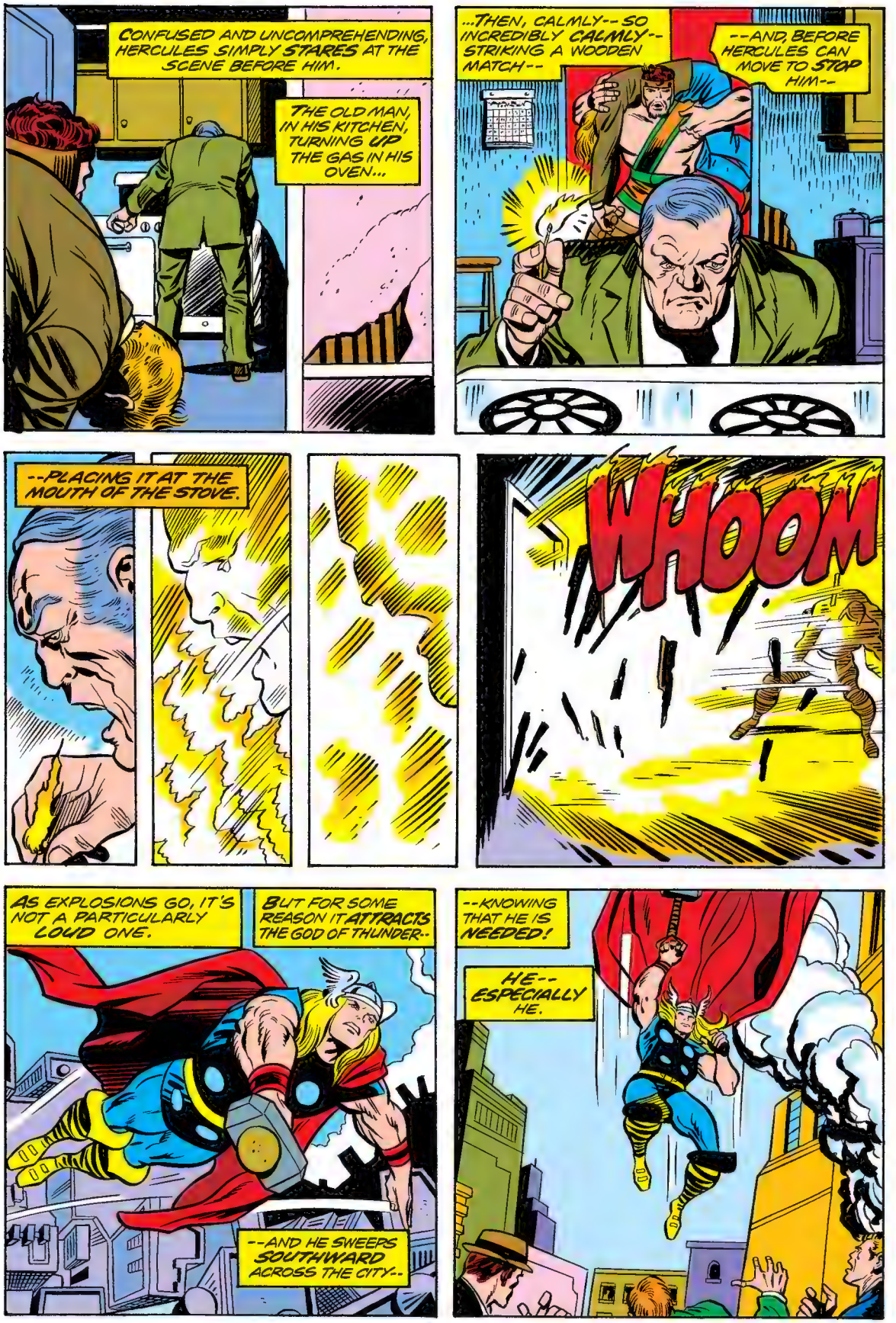

HOLY CRUD.
THAT FIREDOOR-- YA JUST TORE IT OPEN LIKE IT WUZ CARDBOARD OR SOMETHIN'--!
I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S WITH YOU--
BUT YA BETTER STAY BACK, OR I'LL--
FIRE EXIT

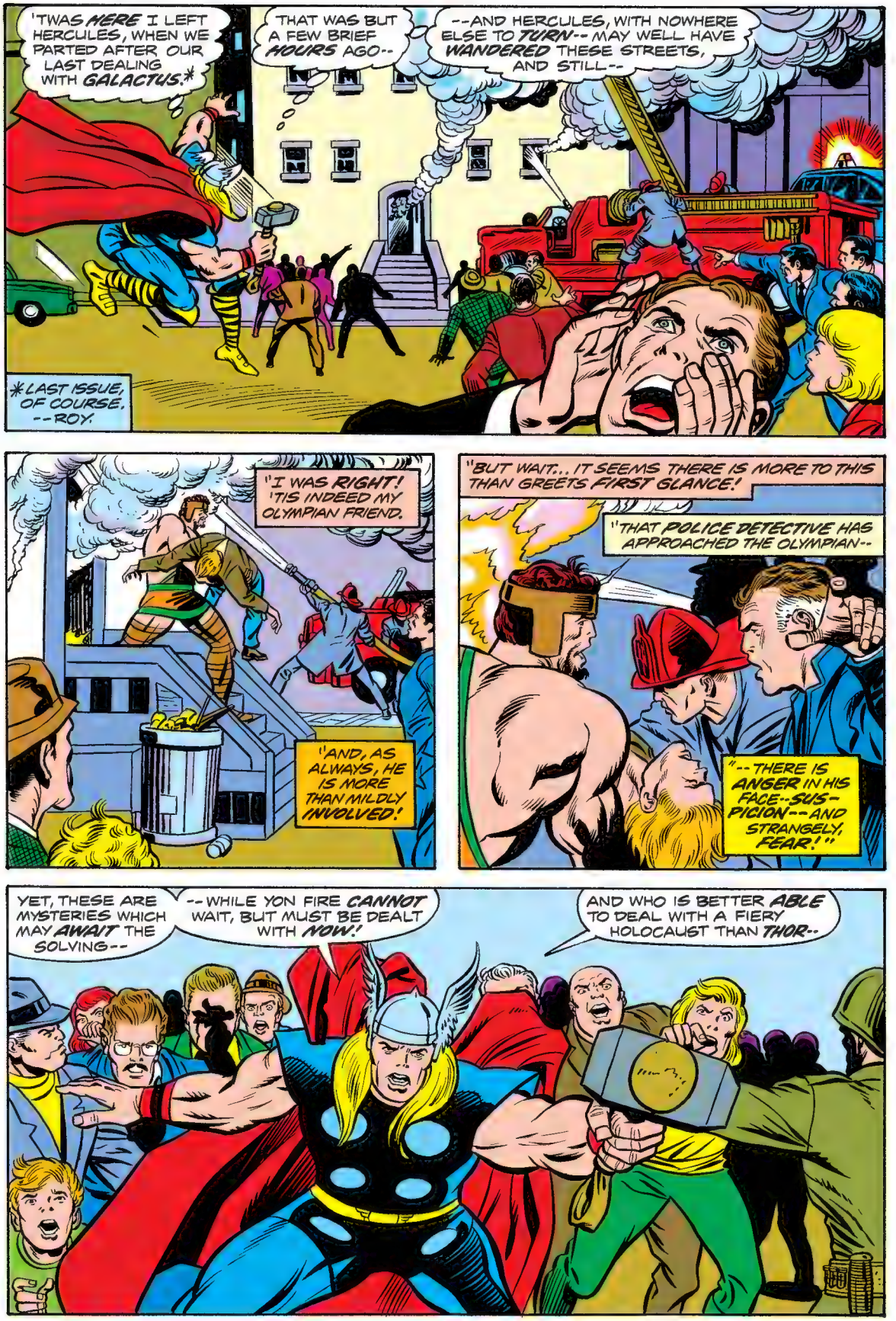
THOU SHALT BE GRATEFUL I CHOOSE TO SPARE THY WORTHLESS HIDE, WHELP--

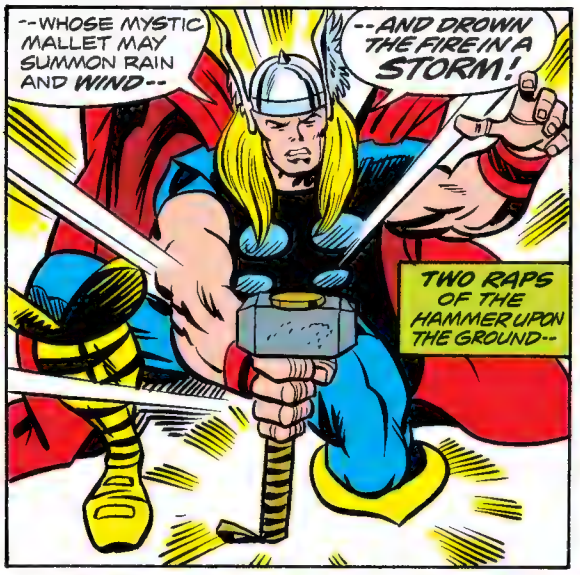

--INSTEAD OF CRUSHING THEE, LIKE THE INSECT THOU TRULY ART!
BAP!
URRRRP!

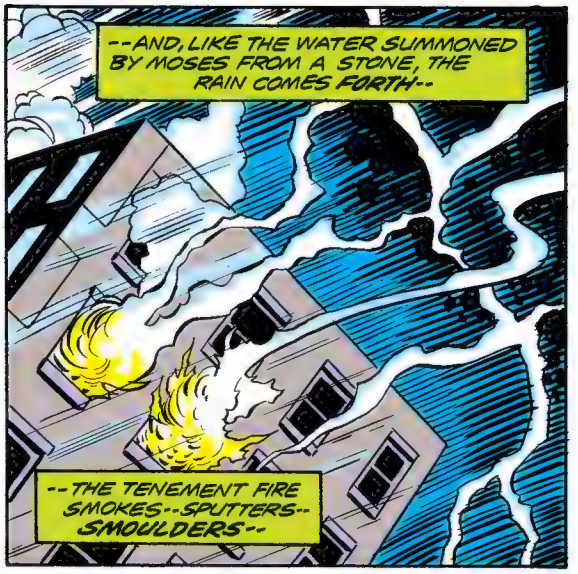

THE BOY FALLS, AND AS THOUGH HE WEIGHS NO MORE THAN A SLEEPING DOG, IS SHOULDERED...
...FOR SUCH IS THE STRENGTH OF HERCULES.

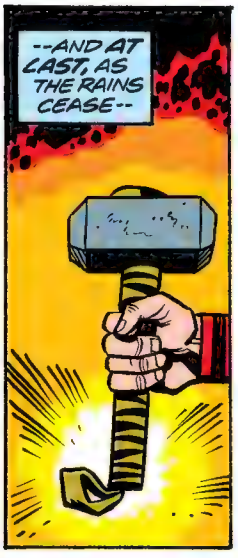

YET, WHEN THE OLYMPIAN GOD RETURNS TO THE SECOND-FLOOR APARTMENT OF THE THIEF'S VICTIM...
GAS...?
THIS IS A NEW ODOR--!
WHAT--?

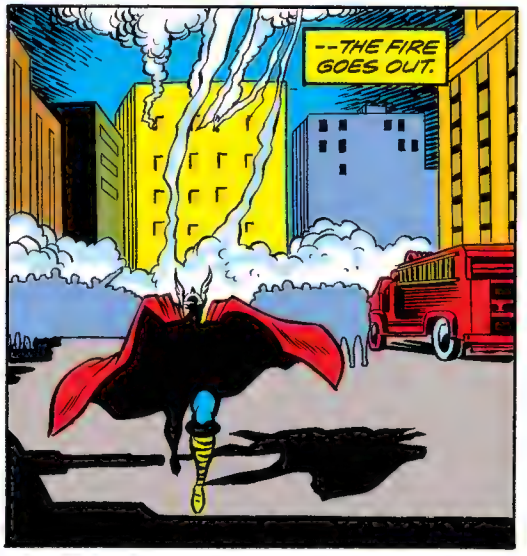

CONFUSED AND UNCOMPREHENDING, HERCULES SIMPLY STARES AT THE SCENE BEFORE HIM.
THE OLD MAN, IN HIS KITCHEN, TURNING UP THE GAS IN HIS OVEN...
...THEN, CALMLY--SO INCREDIBLY CALMLY--STRIKING A WOODEN MATCH--
--AND, BEFORE HERCULES CAN MOVE TO STOP HIM--
--PLACING IT AT THE MOUTH OF THE STOVE.
WHOOM
AS EXPLOSIONS GO, IT'S NOT A PARTICULARLY LOUD ONE.
BUT FOR SOME REASON IT ATTRACTS THE GOD OF THUNDER--
--AND HE SWEEPS SOUTHWARD ACROSS THE CITY--
--KNOWING THAT HE IS NEEDED!
HE--ESPECIALLY HE.


'TWAS MERE I LEFT HERCULES, WHEN WE PARTED AFTER OUR LAST DEALING WITH GALACTUS.*
THAT WAS BUT A FEW BRIEF HOURS AGO--
--AND HERCULES, WITH NOWHERE ELSE TO TURN-- MAY WELL HAVE WANDERED THESE STREETS, AND STILL--
*LAST ISSUE, OF COURSE. --ROY.
"I WAS RIGHT! 'TIS INDEED MY OLYMPIAN FRIEND.
"AND, AS ALWAYS, HE IS MORE THAN MILDLY INVOLVED!
"BUT WAIT... IT SEEMS THERE IS MORE TO THIS THAN GREETS FIRST GLANCE!
"THAT POLICE DETECTIVE HAS APPROACHED THE OLYMPIAN--
"--THERE IS ANGER IN HIS FACE--SUSPICION--AND STRANGELY, FEAR!"
YET, THESE ARE MYSTERIES WHICH MAY AWAIT THE SOLVING--
--WHILE YON FIRE CANNOT WAIT, BUT MUST BE DEALT WITH NOW!
AND WHO IS BETTER ABLE TO DEAL WITH A FIERY HOLOCAUST THAN THOR--

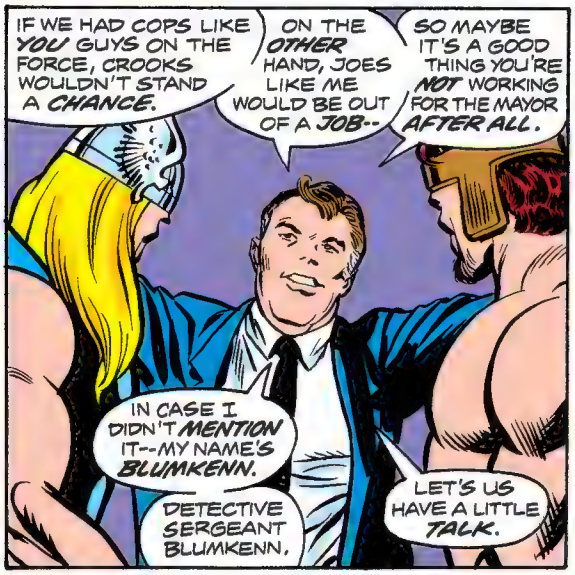

--WHOSE MYSTIC MALLET MAY SUMMON RAIN AND WIND--
--AND DROWN THE FIRE IN A STORM!
TWO RAPS OF THE HAMMER UPON THE GROUND--

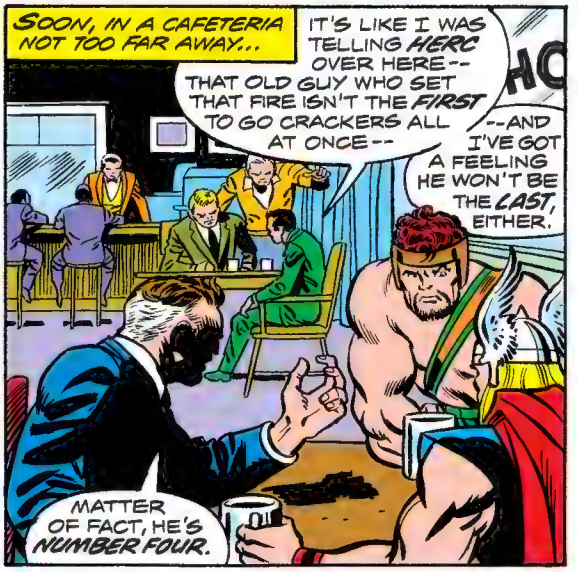

--AND, LIKE THE WATER SUMMONED BY MOSES FROM A STONE, THE RAIN COMES FORTH--
--THE TENEMENT FIRE SMOKES--SPUTTERS--SMOULDERS--

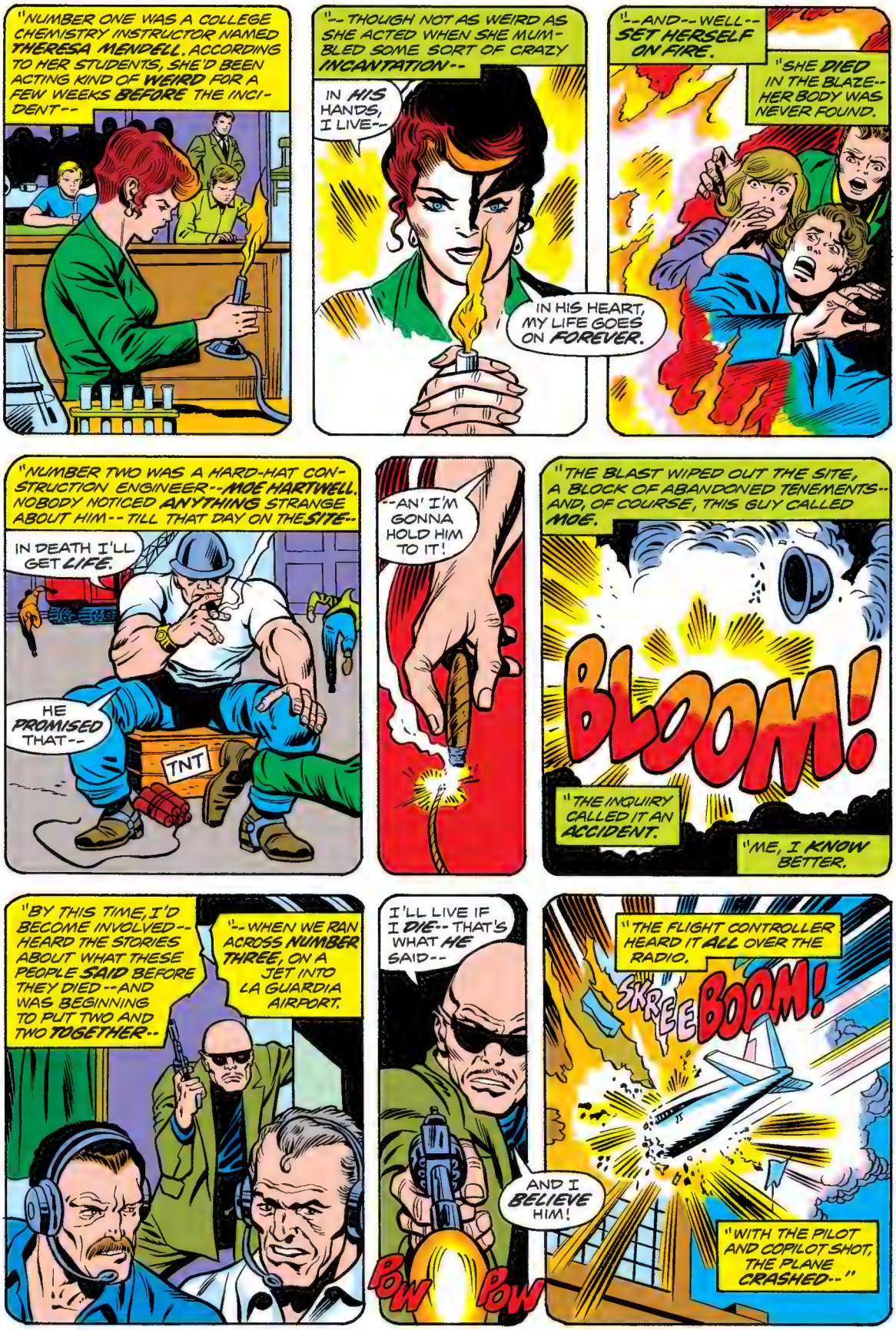

--AND AT LAST, AS THE RAINS CEASE--

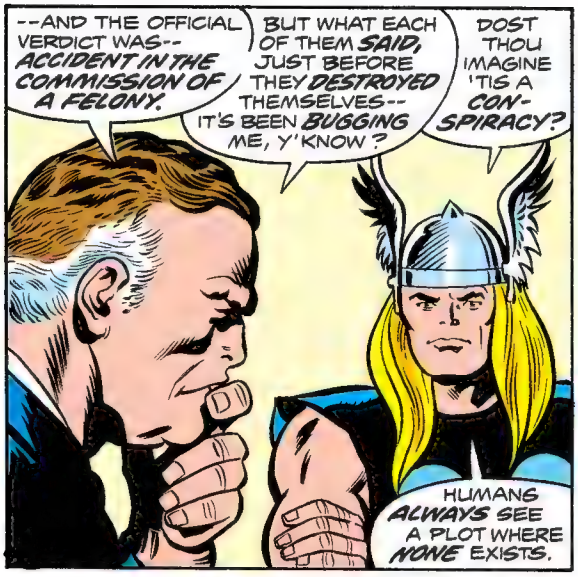

--THE FIRE GOES OUT.

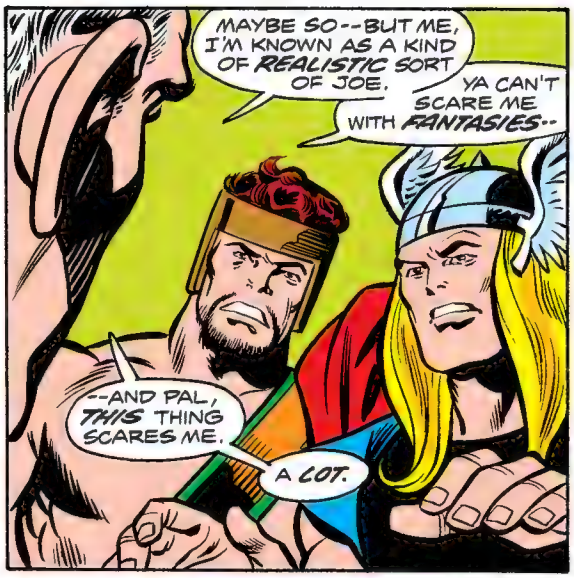
PRETTY NEAT TRICK YOU'VE GOT THERE, MISTER.
I WAS JUST TELLING YOUR FRIEND--


IF WE HAD COPS LIKE YOU GUYS ON THE FORCE, CROOKS WOULDN'T STAND A CHANCE.
ON THE OTHER HAND, JOES LIKE ME WOULD BE OUT OF A JOB--
SO MAYBE IT'S A GOOD THING YOU'RE NOT WORKING FOR THE MAYOR AFTER ALL.
IN CASE I DIDN'T MENTION IT--MY NAME'S BLUMKENN.
DETECTIVE SERGEANT BLUMKENN,
LET'S US HAVE A LITTLE TALK.


SOON, IN A CAFETERIA NOT TOO FAR AWAY...
IT'S LIKE I WAS TELLING HERC OVER HERE--
THAT OLD GUY WHO SET THAT FIRE ISN'T THE FIRST TO GO CRACKERS ALL AT ONCE--
--AND I'VE GOT A FEELING HE WON'T BE THE LAST, EITHER.
MATTER OF FACT, HE'S NUMBER FOUR.

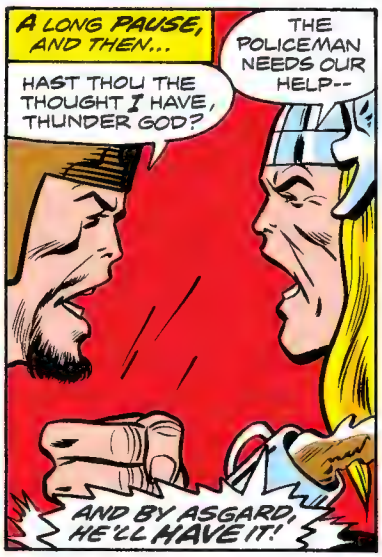

"NUMBER ONE WAS A COLLEGE CHEMISTRY INSTRUCTOR NAMED THERESA MENDELL. ACCORDING TO HER STUDENTS, SHE'D BEEN ACTING KIND OF WEIRD FOR A FEW WEEKS BEFORE THE INCIDENT--
"-- THOUGH NOT AS WEIRD AS SHE ACTED WHEN SHE MUMBLED SOME SORT OF CRAZY INCANTATION--
IN HIS HANDS, I LIVE--
IN HIS HEART, MY LIFE GOES ON FOREVER.
"--AND-- WELL-- SET HERSELF ON FIRE.
"SHE DIED IN THE BLAZE-- HER BODY WAS NEVER FOUND.
"NUMBER TWO WAS A HARD-HAT CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER--MOE HARTWELL. NOBODY NOTICED ANYTHING STRANGE ABOUT HIM-- TILL THAT DAY ON THE SITE--
IN DEATH I'LL GET LIFE.
HE PROMISED THAT--
TNT
--AN' I'M GONNA HOLD HIM TO IT!
"THE BLAST WIPED OUT THE SITE, A BLOCK OF ABANDONED TENEMENTS-- AND, OF COURSE, THIS GUY CALLED MOE.
BLOOM!
"THE INQUIRY CALLED IT AN ACCIDENT.
"ME, I KNOW BETTER.
"BY THIS TIME, I'D BECOME INVOLVED-- HEARD THE STORIES ABOUT WHAT THESE PEOPLE SAID BEFORE THEY DIED--AND WAS BEGINNING TO PUT TWO AND TWO TOGETHER--
"-- WHEN WE RAN ACROSS NUMBER THREE, ON A JET INTO LA GUARDIA AIRPORT.
I'LL LIVE IF I DIE-- THAT'S WHAT HE SAID--
AND I BELIEVE HIM!
POW POW
"THE FLIGHT CONTROLLER HEARD IT ALL OVER THE RADIO.
SKREE BOOM!
"WITH THE PILOT AND COPILOT SHOT, THE PLANE CRASHED--"

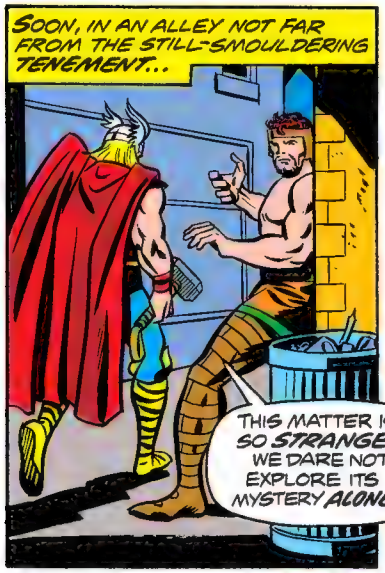

--AND THE OFFICIAL VERDICT WAS-- ACCIDENT IN THE COMMISSION OF A FELONY.
BUT WHAT EACH OF THEM SAID, JUST BEFORE THEY DESTROYED THEMSELVES-- IT'S BEEN BUGGING ME, Y'KNOW?
DOST THOU IMAGINE 'TIS A CON-SPIRACY?
HUMANS ALWAYS SEE A PLOT WHERE NONE EXISTS.

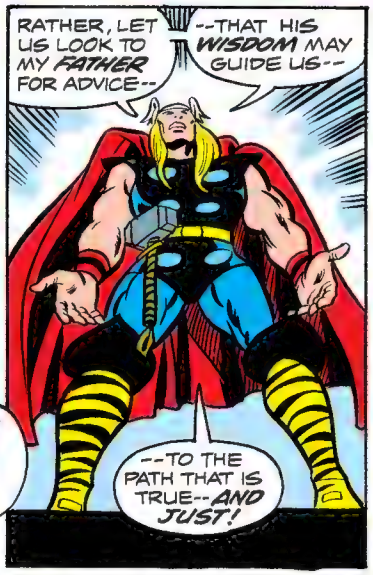

MAYBE SO--BUT ME, I'M KNOWN AS A KIND OF REALISTIC SORT OF JOE.
YA CAN'T SCARE ME WITH FANTASIES--
--AND PAL, THIS THING SCARES ME.
A LOT.

ANYWAY, I JUST THOUGHT I'D TELL YOU--IN CASE YOU HAD SOME IDEAS ON HOW TO HANDLE IT.
IF YOU WANNA LAUGH ABOUT IT, SWELL.

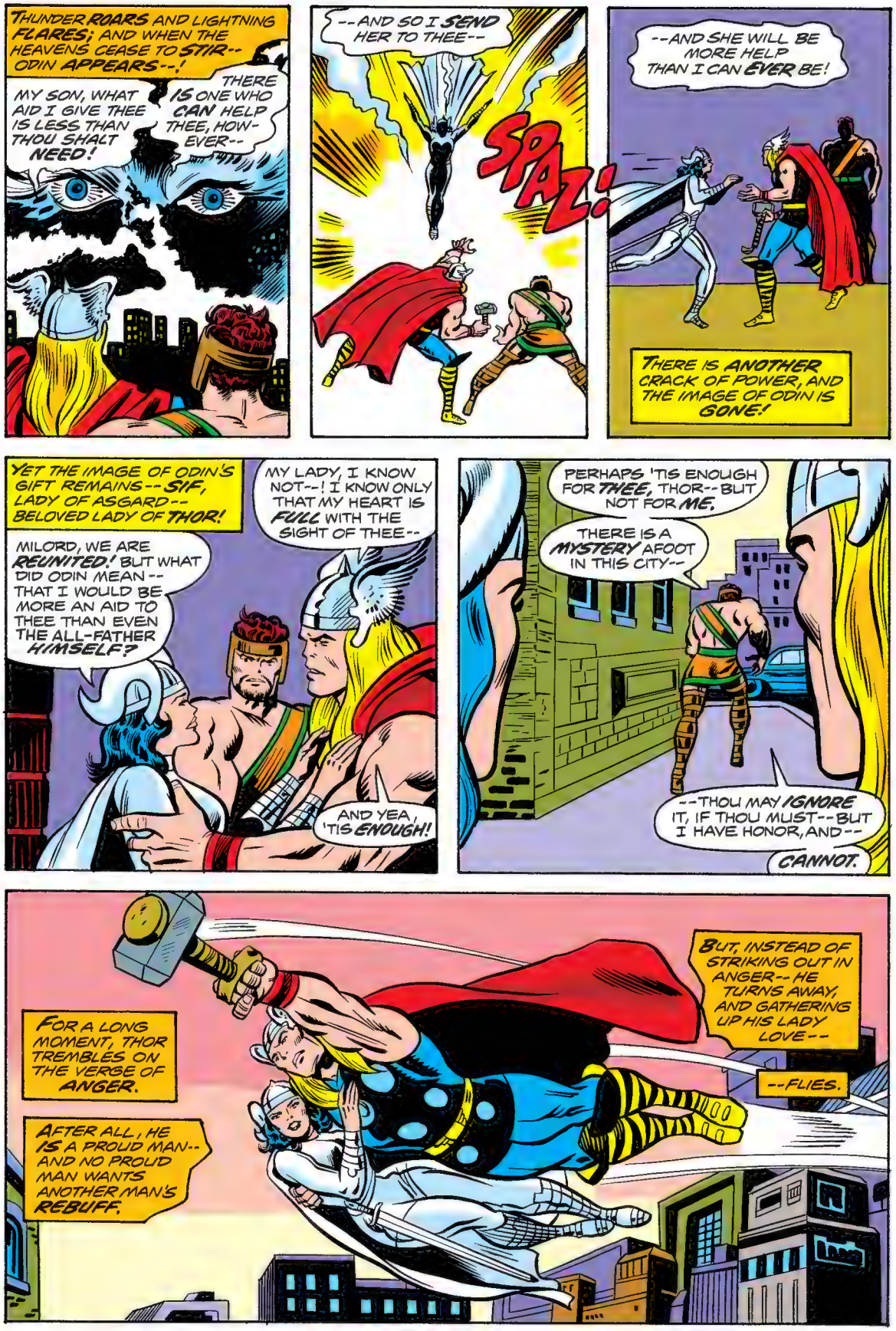
ME--I'VE GOT BETTER THINGS TO DO.

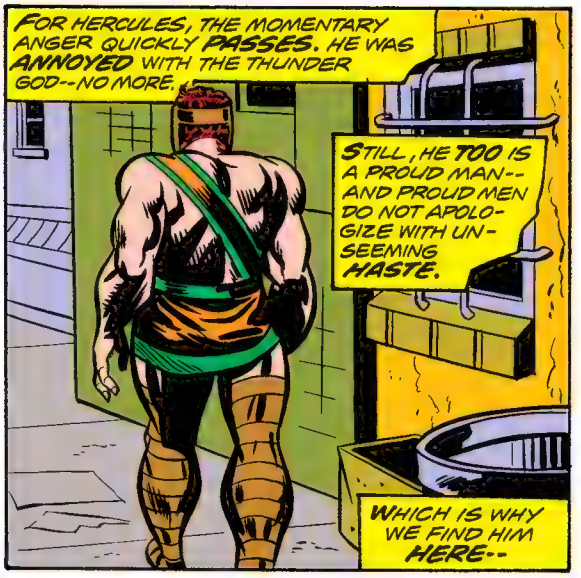

A LONG PAUSE, AND THEN...
THE POLICEMAN NEEDS OUR HELP--
HAST THOU THE THOUGHT I HAVE, THUNDER GOD?
AND BY ASGARD, HE'LL HAVE IT!

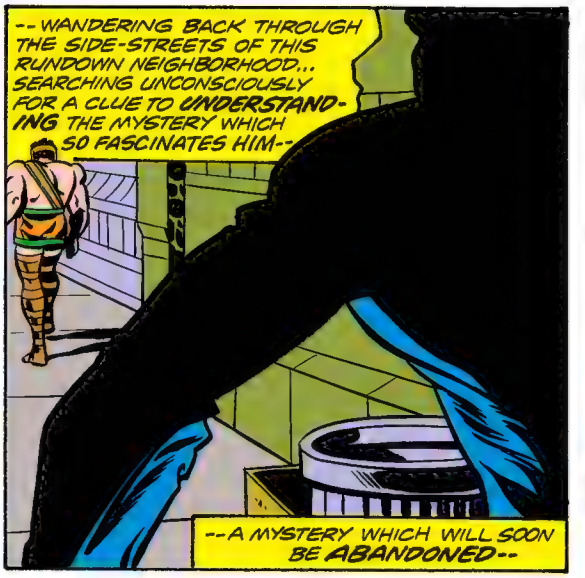

SOON, IN AN ALLEY NOT FAR FROM THE STILL-SMOULDERING TENEMENT...
THIS MATTER IS SO STRANGE, WE DARE NOT EXPLORE ITS MYSTERY ALONE.


RATHER, LET US LOOK TO MY FATHER FOR ADVICE--
--THAT HIS WISDOM MAY GUIDE US--
--TO THE PATH THAT IS TRUE--AND JUST!

LORD ODIN, ALL-FATHER OF ASGARD-- THY SON DOTH BESEECH THEE!
APPEAR TO US, NOW--
AND GIVE US WHAT AID THOU CANST!

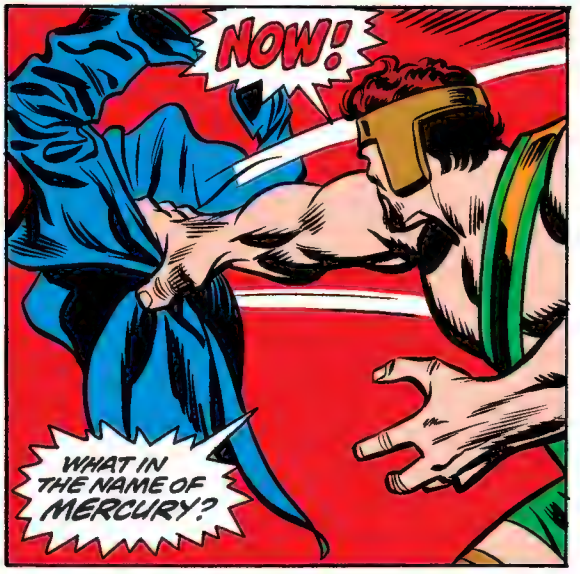

THUNDER ROARS AND LIGHTNING FLARES; AND WHEN THE HEAVENS CEASE TO STIR-- ODIN APPEARS--!
MY SON, WHAT AID I GIVE THEE IS LESS THAN THOU SHALT NEED!
THERE IS ONE WHO CAN HELP THEE, HOWEVER--
--AND SO I SEND HER TO THEE--
SPAZ!
--AND SHE WILL BE MORE HELP THAN I CAN EVER BE!
THERE IS ANOTHER CRACK OF POWER, AND THE IMAGE OF ODIN IS GONE!
YET THE IMAGE OF ODIN'S GIFT REMAINS--SIF, LADY OF ASGARD--BELOVED LADY OF THOR!
MILORD, WE ARE REUNITED! BUT WHAT DID ODIN MEAN--THAT I WOULD BE MORE AN AID TO THEE THAN EVEN THE ALL-FATHER HIMSELF?
MY LADY, I KNOW NOT--! I KNOW ONLY THAT MY HEART IS FULL WITH THE SIGHT OF THEE--
AND YEA, 'TIS ENOUGH!
PERHAPS 'TIS ENOUGH FOR THEE, THOR--BUT NOT FOR ME.
THERE IS A MYSTERY AFOOT IN THIS CITY--
--THOU MAY IGNORE IT, IF THOU MUST--BUT I HAVE HONOR, AND--
CANNOT.
FOR A LONG MOMENT, THOR TREMBLES ON THE VERGE OF ANGER.
AFTER ALL, HE IS A PROUD MAN--AND NO PROUD MAN WANTS ANOTHER MAN'S REBUFF.
BUT, INSTEAD OF STRIKING OUT IN ANGER--HE TURNS AWAY, AND GATHERING UP HIS LADY LOVE--
--FLIES.


FOR HERCULES, THE MOMENTARY ANGER QUICKLY PASSES. HE WAS ANNOYED WITH THE THUNDER GOD--NO MORE.
STILL, HE TOO IS A PROUD MAN--AND PROUD MEN DO NOT APOLOGIZE WITH UNSEEMING HASTE.
WHICH IS WHY WE FIND HIM HERE--

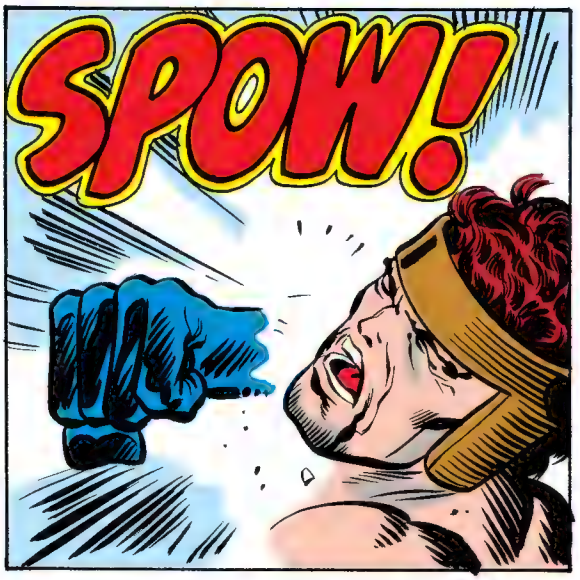

--WANDERING BACK THROUGH THE SIDE-STREETS OF THIS RUNDOWN NEIGHBORHOOD... SEARCHING UNCONSCIOUSLY FOR A CLUE TO UNDERSTANDING THE MYSTERY WHICH SO FASCINATES HIM--
--A MYSTERY WHICH WILL SOON BE ABANDONED--

--WHEN HERCULES REALIZES THAT HE'S BEING--
--FOLLOWED?
FOR TWO BLOCKS NOW, SOMEONE HAS BEEN BEHIND ME--

--AND AS I PAUSE AT THIS CORNER, I CAN HEAR HIS FOOTSTEPS--APPROACHING.
WE SHALL SEE WHO IT IS THAT DARES PURSUE THE SON OF ZEUS--AND WE SHALL SEE IT--

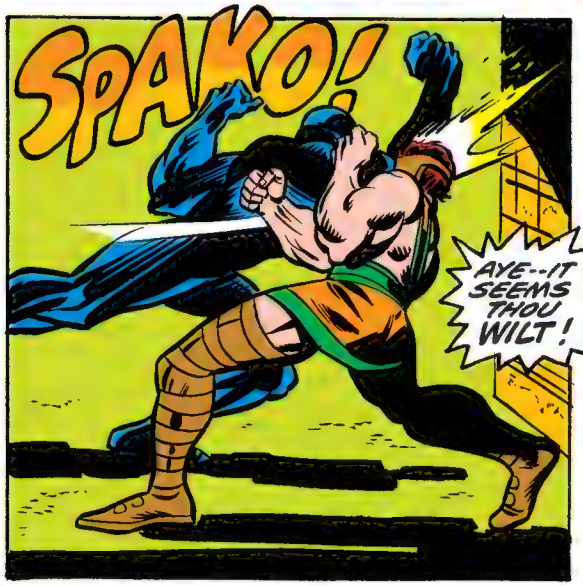

NOW!
WHAT IN THE NAME OF MERCURY?

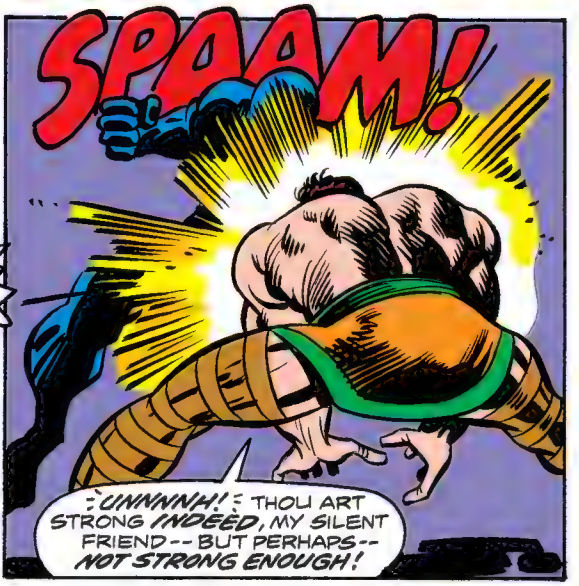
AN EMPTY SUIT OF CLOTHES?
'TIS IMPOSSIBLE--AN UTTER MADNESS!
I SENSE SORCERY HERE--A VILE, BLACK SORCERY! 'TIS ALMOST AS IF--

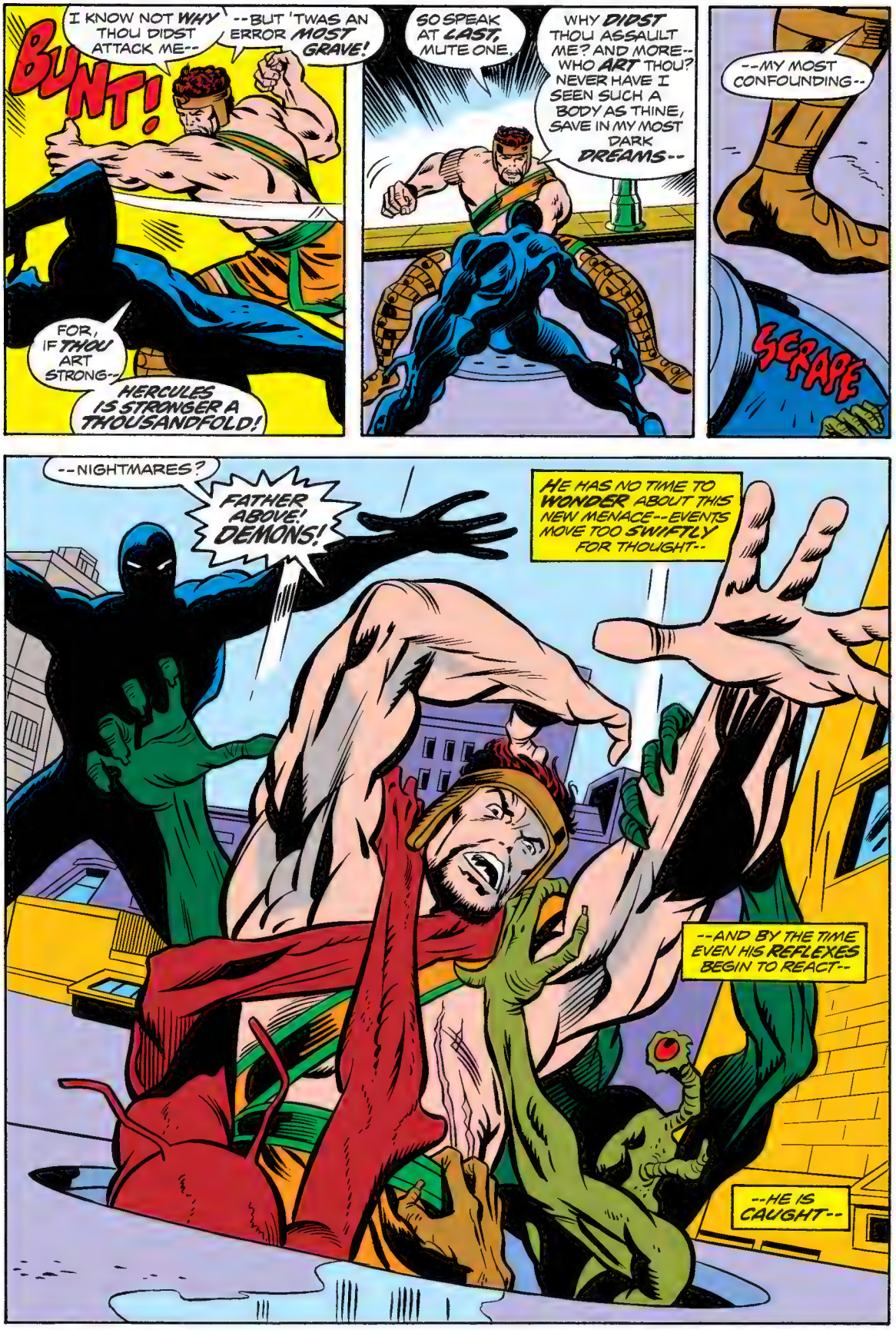

SPOW!

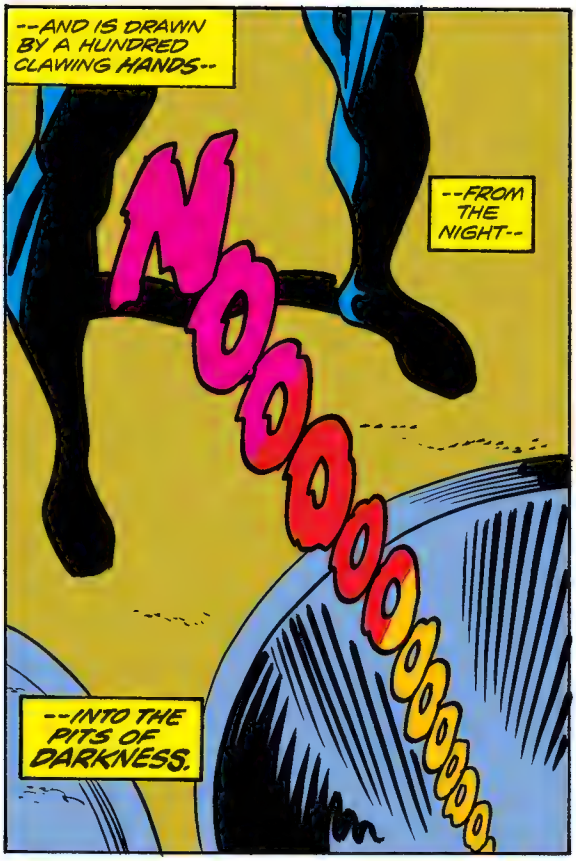
NOT MANY BLOWS ARE STRONG ENOUGH TO DROP THIS GOD OF OLYMPUS.
THIS BLOW WAS... AND AS HE LOOKS UP... ONLY SLIGHTLY DAZED, HERCULES DOES NOT KNOW WHETHER TO BE MORE SURPRISED BY THE STRENGTH OF THE BLOW--

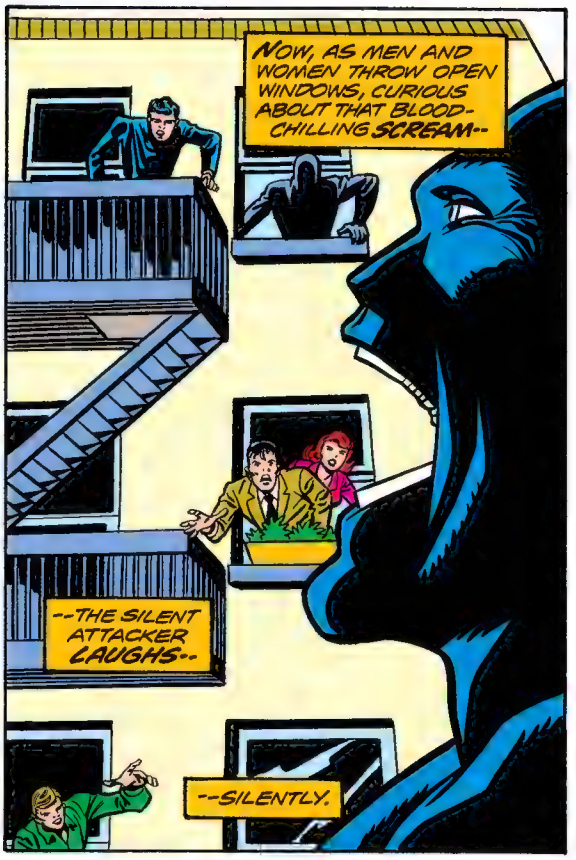
--OR BY ITS WIELDER!
--BY MELTING INTO THE SHADOWS? WELL? WILT THOU ANSWER?
THY SKIN--'TIS ALL BUT COMPLETELY OPAQUE! THOU ART ALMOST A SHADOW--A FIGURE FORMED OF DARKNESS ITSELF!
IS THAT HOW THOU DIDST APPEAR SO SUDDENLY--AS THOUGH FROM NOWHERE--
NO? THEN-- WILT THOU FIGHT?


SPAKO!
AYE--IT SEEMS THOU WILT!

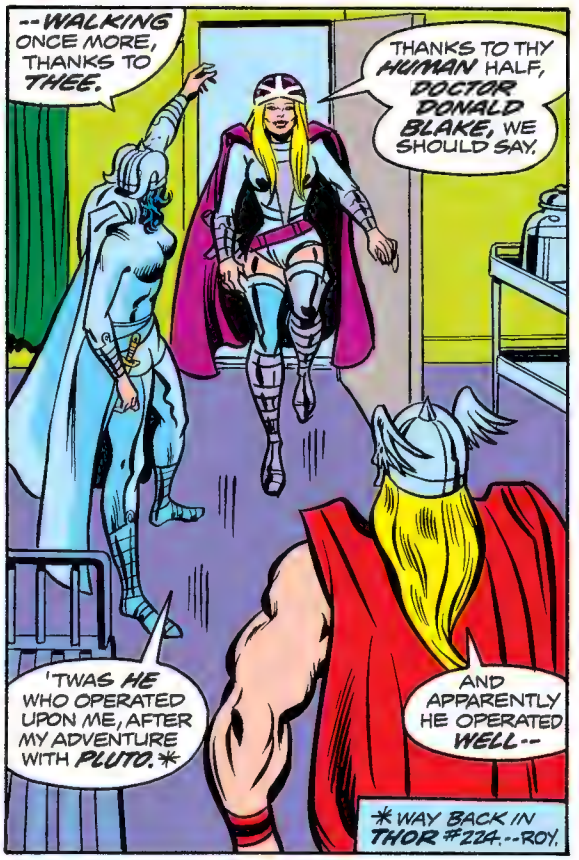

SPAAM!
:UNNNNH!: THOU ART STRONG INDEED, MY SILENT FRIEND--BUT PERHAPS-- NOT STRONG ENOUGH!

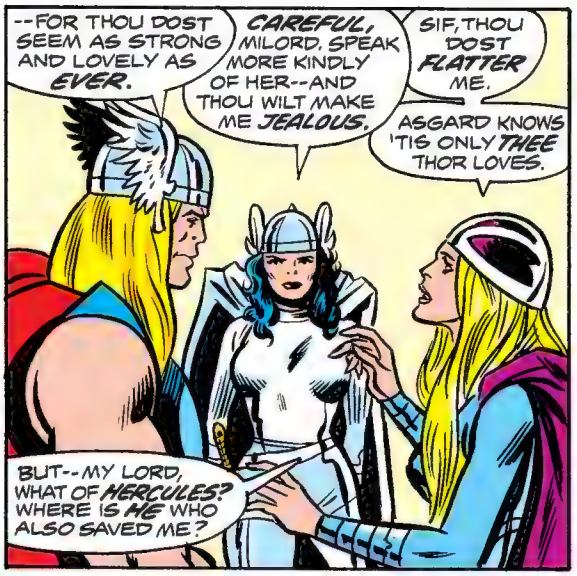

I KNOW NOT WHY THOU DIDST ATTACK ME--
--BUT 'TWAS AN ERROR MOST GRAVE!
BUNT!
FOR, IF THOU ART STRONG--
HERCULES IS STRONGER A THOUSANDFOLD!
SO SPEAK AT LAST, MUTE ONE.
WHY DIDST THOU ASSAULT ME? AND MORE--WHO ART THOU? NEVER HAVE I SEEN SUCH A BODY AS THINE, SAVE IN MY MOST DARK DREAMS--
--MY MOST CONFOUNDING--
SCRAPE
--NIGHTMARES?
FATHER ABOVE! DEMONS!
HE HAS NO TIME TO WONDER ABOUT THIS NEW MENACE--EVENTS MOVE TOO SWIFTLY FOR THOUGHT--
--AND BY THE TIME EVEN HIS REFLEXES BEGIN TO REACT--
--HE IS CAUGHT--

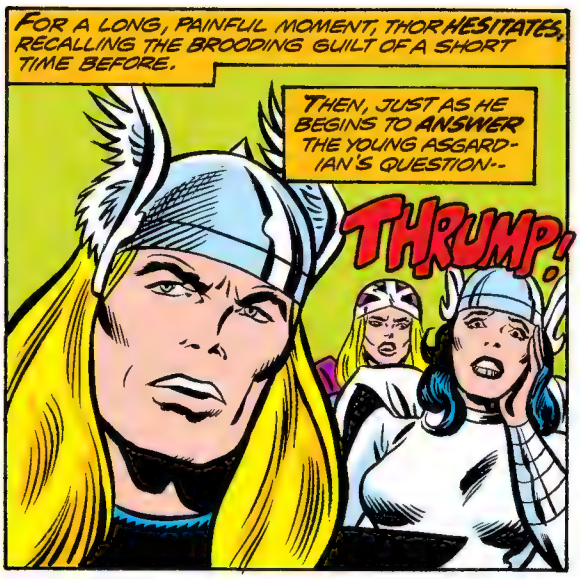

--AND IS DRAWN BY A HUNDRED CLAWING HANDS--
--FROM THE NIGHT--
NOOOOOOOOOO
--INTO THE PITS OF DARKNESS.

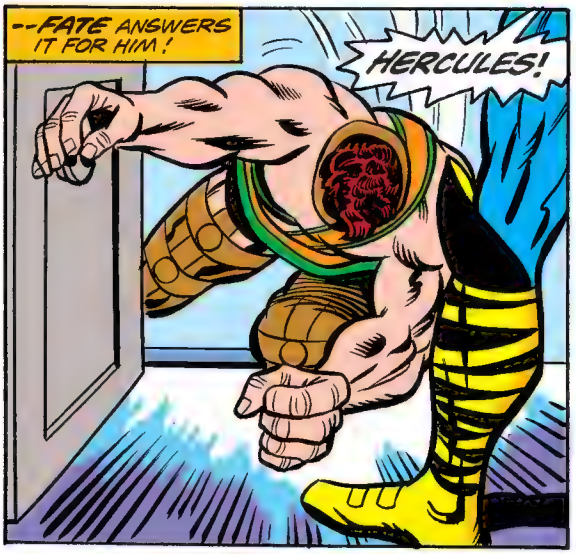

NOW, AS MEN AND WOMEN THROW OPEN WINDOWS, CURIOUS ABOUT THAT BLOOD-CHILLING SCREAM--
--THE SILENT ATTACKER LAUGHS--
--SILENTLY.

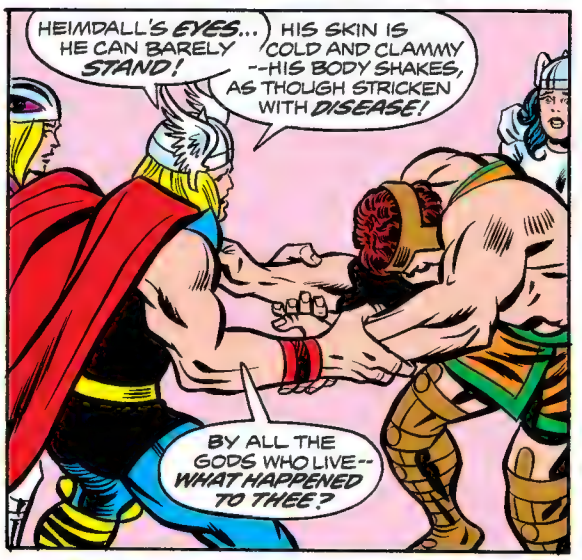
MORE THAN AN HOUR LATER, IN A HOSPITAL SUITE NOT FAR FROM THE MIDTOWN LOCATION OF THE AVENGERS MANSION...
MILORD, CHEER THYSELF. WHEN HERCULES RETURNS, THOU WILT MAKE AMENDS, THE HARSH WORDS WILL BE FORGOTTEN--
AND THOU WILT BE FRIENDS, AS ALWAYS.
YEA, I KNOW THIS-- AND YET--
AND YET, THOU ART SORRY FOR THY ANGER--AS HERCULES, NO DOUBT IS SORRY FOR HIS ANGER.
PLEASE, MILORD --ABANDON THESE THOUGHTS. COME, LOOK AT HOW WELL KRISTA IS--

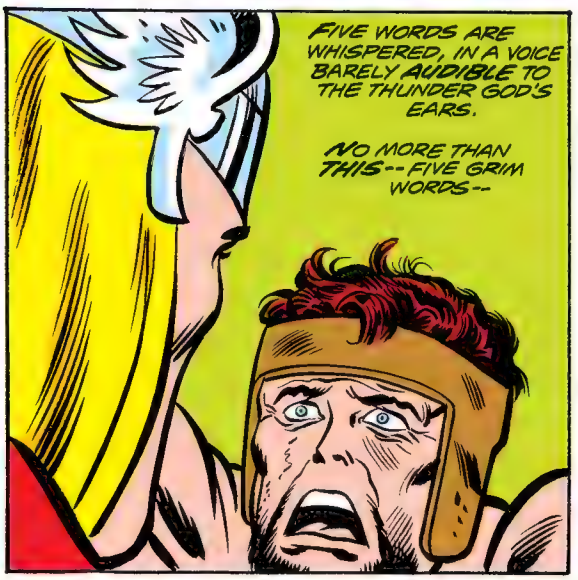

--WALKING ONCE MORE, THANKS TO THEE.
THANKS TO THY HUMAN HALF, DOCTOR DONALD BLAKE, WE SHOULD SAY.
'TWAS HE WHO OPERATED UPON ME, AFTER MY ADVENTURE WITH PLUTO.*
AND APPARENTLY HE OPERATED WELL--
*WAY BACK IN THOR #224.--ROY.

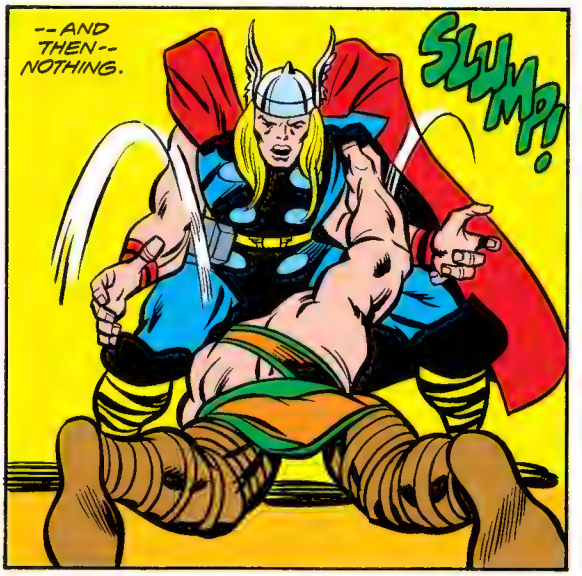

--FOR THOU DOST SEEM AS STRONG AND LOVELY AS EVER.
CAREFUL, MILORD. SPEAK MORE KINDLY OF HER--AND THOU WILT MAKE ME JEALOUS.
SIF, THOU DOST FLATTER ME.
ASGARD KNOWS 'TIS ONLY THEE THOR LOVES.
BUT--MY LORD, WHAT OF HERCULES? WHERE IS HE WHO ALSO SAVED ME?

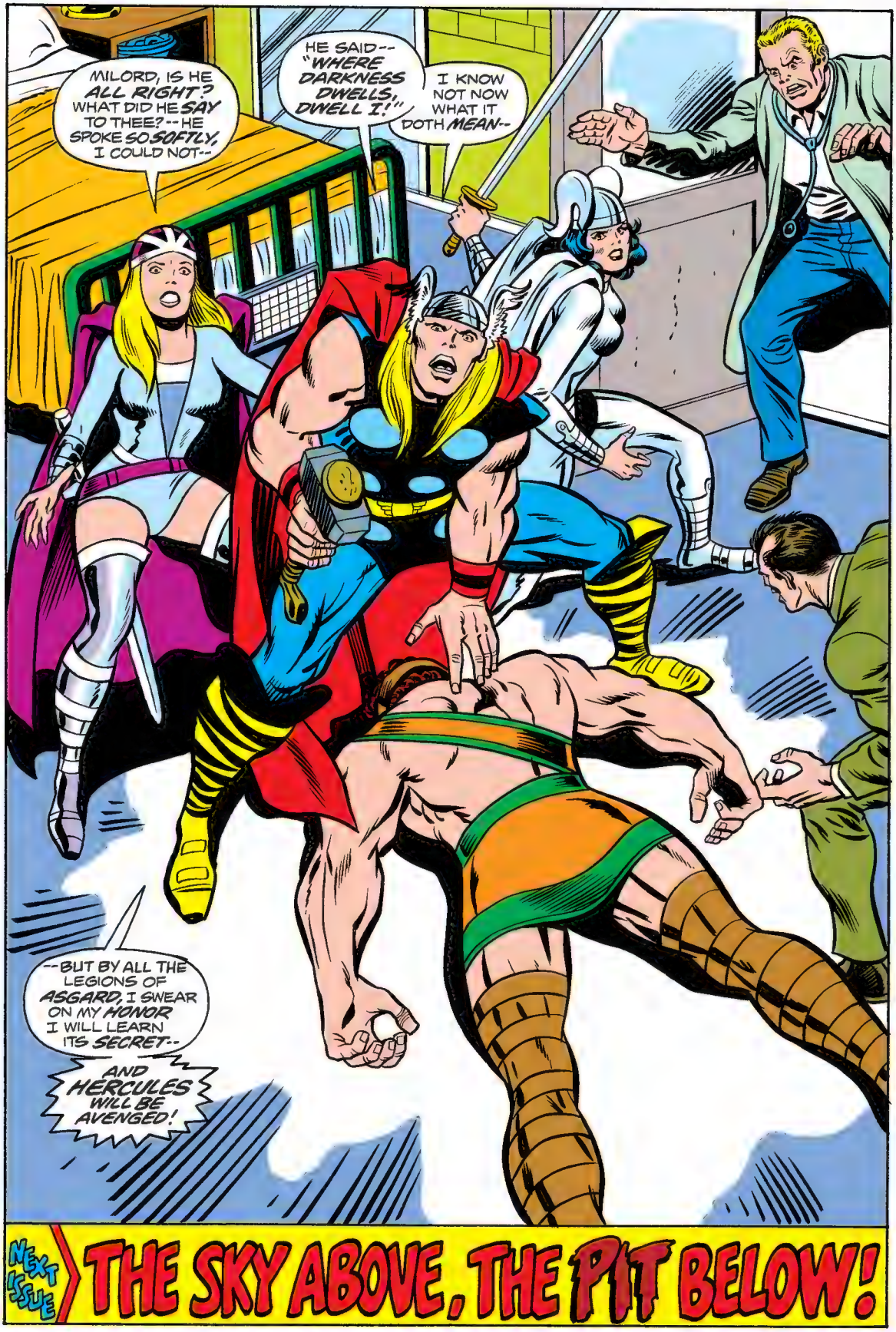

FOR A LONG, PAINFUL MOMENT, THOR HESITATES, RECALLING THE BROODING GUILT OF A SHORT TIME BEFORE.
THEN, JUST AS HE BEGINS TO ANSWER THE YOUNG ASGARDIAN'S QUESTION--
THRUMP!


--FATE ANSWERS IT FOR HIM!
HERCULES!


HEIMDALL'S EYES... HE CAN BARELY STAND!
HIS SKIN IS COLD AND CLAMMY --HIS BODY SHAKES, AS THOUGH STRICKEN WITH DISEASE!
BY ALL THE GODS WHO LIVE-- WHAT HAPPENED TO THEE?


FIVE WORDS ARE WHISPERED, IN A VOICE BARELY AUDIBLE TO THE THUNDER GOD'S EARS.
NO MORE THAN THIS--FIVE GRIM WORDS--


--AND THEN-- NOTHING.
SLUMP!


MILORD, IS HE ALL RIGHT? WHAT DID HE SAY TO THEE?--HE SPOKE SO SOFTLY, I COULD NOT--
HE SAID-- "WHERE DARKNESS DWELLS, DWELL I!"
I KNOW NOT NOW WHAT IT DOTH MEAN--
--BUT BY ALL THE LEGIONS OF ASGARD, I SWEAR ON MY HONOR I WILL LEARN ITS SECRET--
AND HERCULES WILL BE AVENGED!
NEXT ISSUE
THE SKY ABOVE, THE PIT BELOW!

THOR
MARVEL COMICS GROUP™
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25¢
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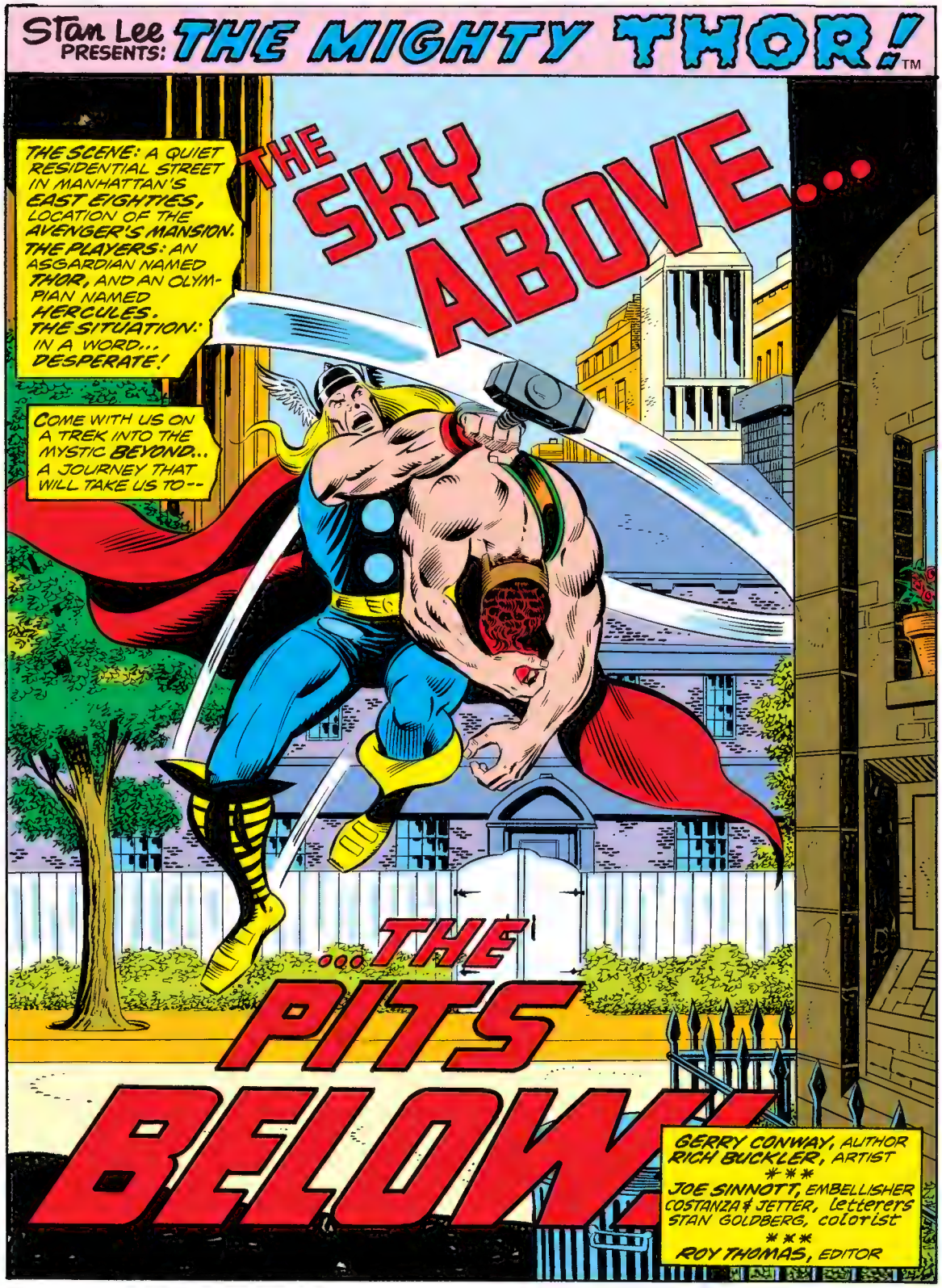
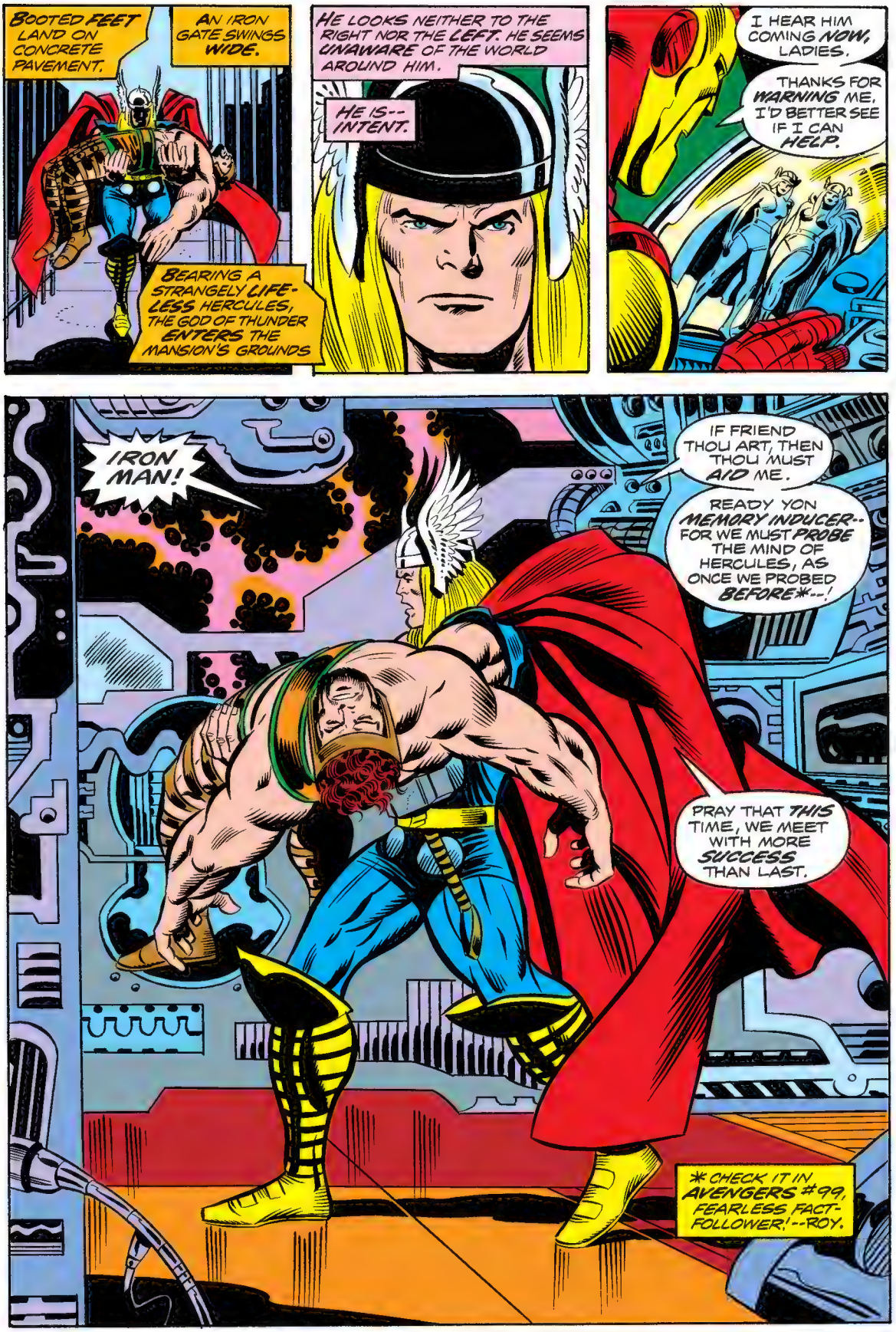
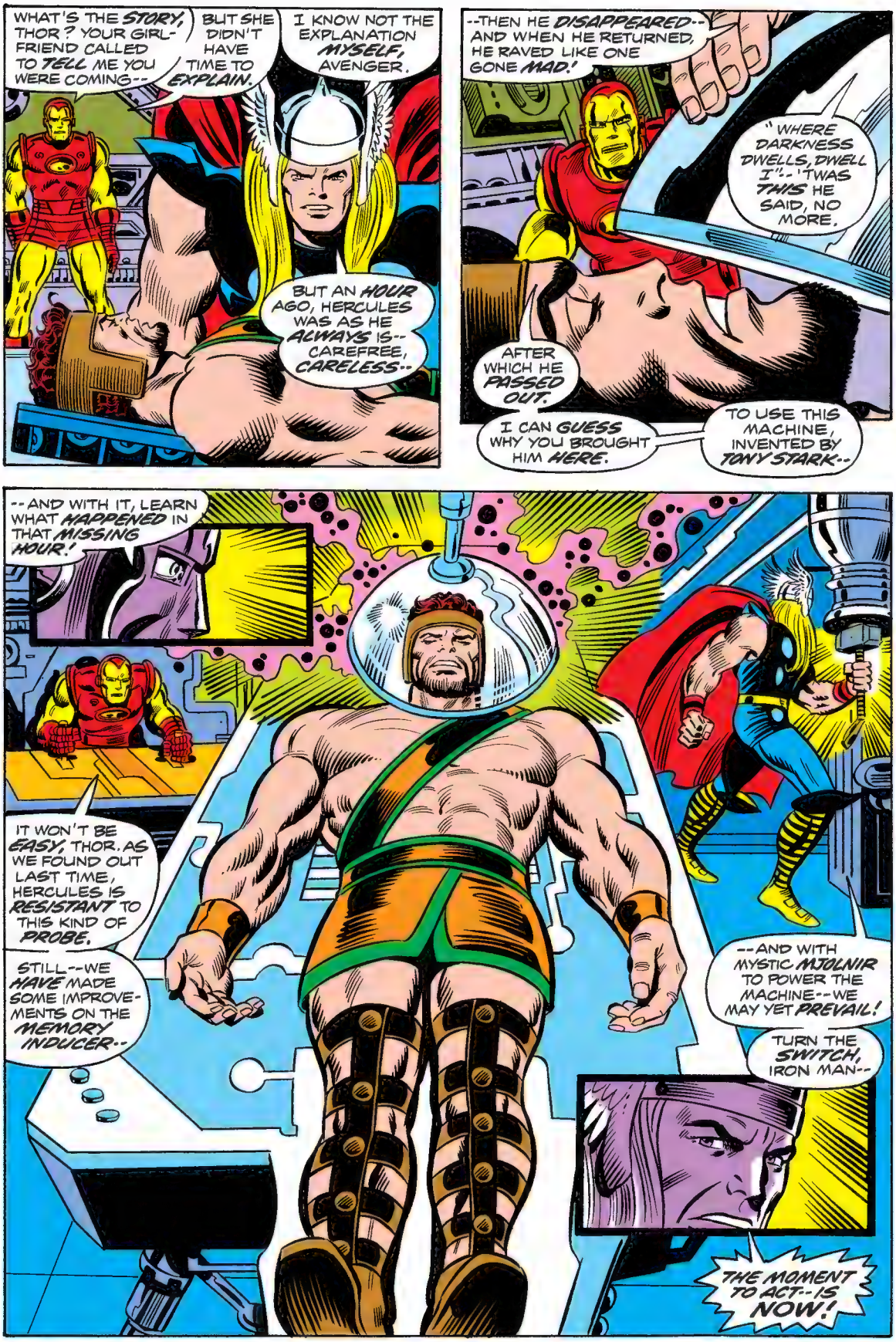
DEC
02450
THE MIGHTY
THOR
THE SKY ABOVE--THE PIT BELOW!
HERCULES! STAND THEE AT MY SIDE AGAINST THESE HELLSPAWN--
--OR ALL THE EARTH IS DOOMED!
SPECIAL NOTE: YOU'LL NEVER GUESS THE SHOCKING SURPRISE-STAR WHOSE COMING IS HERALDED IN THIS ISSUE!!
BUCKLER + SINNOTT


Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE MIGHTY THOR! ™
THE SCENE: A QUIET RESIDENTIAL STREET IN MANHATTAN'S EAST EIGHTIES, LOCATION OF THE AVENGER'S MANSION. THE PLAYERS: AN ASGARDIAN NAMED THOR, AND AN OLYMPIAN NAMED HERCULES. THE SITUATION: IN A WORD... DESPERATE!
COME WITH US ON A TREK INTO THE MYSTIC BEYOND... A JOURNEY THAT WILL TAKE US TO--
THE SKY ABOVE...
...THE PITS BELOW!
GERRY CONWAY, AUTHOR
RICH BUCKLER, ARTIST
* * *
JOE SINNOTT, EMBELLISHER
COSTANZA & JETTER, letterers
STAN GOLDBERG, colorist
* * *
ROY THOMAS, EDITOR


BOOTED FEET LAND ON CONCRETE PAVEMENT.
AN IRON GATE SWINGS WIDE.
BEARING A STRANGELY LIFE-LESS HERCULES, THE GOD OF THUNDER ENTERS THE MANSION'S GROUNDS
HE LOOKS NEITHER TO THE RIGHT NOR THE LEFT. HE SEEMS UNAWARE OF THE WORLD AROUND HIM.
HE IS-- INTENT.
I HEAR HIM COMING NOW, LADIES.
THANKS FOR WARNING ME, I'D BETTER SEE IF I CAN HELP.
IRON MAN!
IF FRIEND THOU ART, THEN THOU MUST AID ME.
READY YON MEMORY INDUCER-- FOR WE MUST PROBE THE MIND OF HERCULES, AS ONCE WE PROBED BEFORE*--!
PRAY THAT THIS TIME, WE MEET WITH MORE SUCCESS THAN LAST.
*CHECK IT IN AVENGERS #99, FEARLESS FACT-FOLLOWER!--ROY.

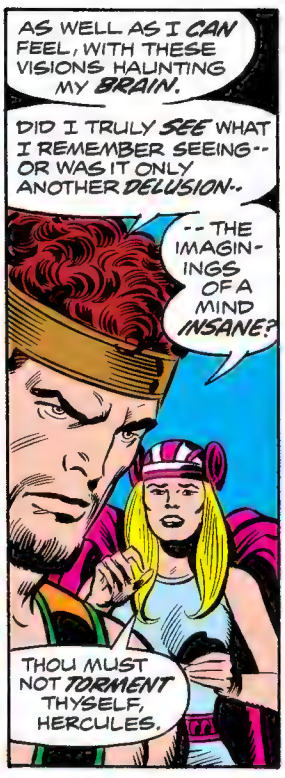

WHAT'S THE STORY, THOR? YOUR GIRL-FRIEND CALLED TO TELL ME YOU WERE COMING--
BUT SHE DIDN'T HAVE TIME TO EXPLAIN.
I KNOW NOT THE EXPLANATION MYSELF, AVENGER.
BUT AN HOUR AGO, HERCULES WAS AS HE ALWAYS IS--CAREFREE, CARELESS--
--THEN HE DISAPPEARED--AND WHEN HE RETURNED, HE RAVED LIKE ONE GONE MAD!
"WHERE DARKNESS DWELLS, DWELL I"--'TWAS THIS HE SAID, NO MORE.
AFTER WHICH HE PASSED OUT.
I CAN GUESS WHY YOU BROUGHT HIM HERE.
TO USE THIS MACHINE, INVENTED BY TONY STARK--
--AND WITH IT, LEARN WHAT HAPPENED IN THAT MISSING HOUR!
IT WON'T BE EASY, THOR. AS WE FOUND OUT LAST TIME, HERCULES IS RESISTANT TO THIS KIND OF PROBE.
STILL--WE HAVE MADE SOME IMPROVEMENTS ON THE MEMORY INDUCER--
--AND WITH MYSTIC MJOLNIR TO POWER THE MACHINE--WE MAY YET PREVAIL!
TURN THE SWITCH, IRON MAN--
THE MOMENT TO ACT--IS NOW!

SOFTLY AT FIRST, THEN WITH INCREASING LOUDNESS, A RHYTHMIC HUM BEGINS TO THROB WITHIN THE LOW-CEILINGED CHAMBER...! WITH EACH PASSING SECOND, IT GROWS EVER LOUDER... UNTIL IT BECOMES AN EAR-SPLITTING WHINE...
MMMMM
...AND SEEMS TO WAKE THE UNCONSCIOUS HERCULES!
BY MY FATHER'S BEARD-- NO!
RIPP
I WILL NOT REMEMBER!
LET PLUTO TEAR ME FROM THIS WORLD --LET ZEUS EXILE ME FROM FAIR OLYMPUS--
WHAM
PLOW!
--I--
--WILL NOT--
REMEMBER?
DEMONS! DEVILS!
THOU HAST RETURNED TO HAUNT ME ANEW!
APPROACH, AND I'LL DESTROY THEE!
I SWEAR IT BY MY UNDYING SOUL!

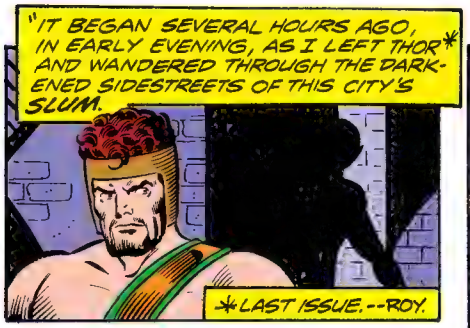
SIR, THE TWO YOUNG LADIES YOU TOLD ME ABOUT HAVE ARRIVED.
SHALL I SEND THEM IN, OR WOULD YOU PREFER--
OH MY LORD!
WHAK!
BEGONE, DEMON!
I COMMAND THEE, GET THEE BEHIND ME!
WHOA, BIG FELLA--IF YOU KEEP THIS UP, WE'LL LOSE OUR INSURANCE ON THIS PLACE!
GIVE ME A HAND HERE, THOR--HE'S--
SPAROOM!
WE HAVE TO DO SOMETHING--HE'S DESTROYING EVERYTHING!
PERHAPS IF I--
NOT THEE, MORTAL.
I OWE MY LIFE TO THIS GODLING, AS MUCH AS I OWE IT TO THOR.
IF A RISK MUST BE TAKEN--
I MUST TAKE IT!
HEIMDAL'S EYES! KRISTA, 'TIS NOT THE HERCULES THOU DOST KNOW--
--BUT A GOD GONE MAD!
TAKE CARE LEST HE--

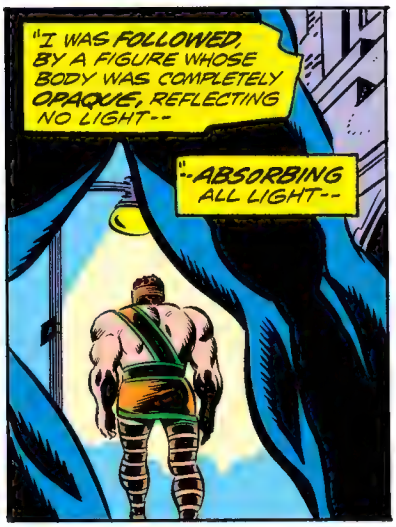
"HE WILL DO NOTHING, THOR," THE YOUNG GODDESS SAYS SOFTLY. "HE IS FRIGHTENED--AFRAID--AND YES, DELUDED.
"BUT HE WILL NOT HARM ME. HIS NOBILITY IS FAR TOO GREAT, TOO MUCH A PART OF HIM.
"HE WILL SEE ME--AND HE WILL KNOW ME--
"--AND FOR THE MOMENT--
"--HIS NIGHTMARE--
"--WILL BE GONE."
THE MOMENT STRETCHES TO A MINUTE, THE MINUTE TO AN HOUR, AND WHEN HERCULES STIRS ONCE MORE... HIS EYES ARE LIT WITH THE GLOW OF REASON...
THE WOMAN SAVED ME, THOR. MY MIND WAS ASWIRL WITH A THOUSAND PHANTOMS--
--TILL SHE BROKE THROUGH THE MIST AND RE-TURNED MY SANITY.
CANST THOU NOW REM-EMBER THE HOURS THAT WERE LOST TO THEE?
AYE...AND THE MEMORY IS ALMOST AS TERRIBLE AS THE EVENT ITSELF.
HAVE NO FEAR, ASGARDIAN--I'M NOT ABOUT TO LOSE CONTROL AGAIN.
STILL, I MUST HAVE TIME--TIME TO AB-SORB WHAT I NOW RECALL. THEN WE'LL TALK, THEE AND I--
AND WHEN WE HAVE FINISHED TALKING, WE'LL MAKE OUR PLANS--TO FIGHT!

PERHAPS THE GENTLEMEN AND LADIES WOULD LIKE SOME TEA.
IF YOU WISH, I CAN ALSO PREPARE A SMALL SNACK --SOMETHING TO TIDE YOU OVER UNTIL DINNER--?
THANK YOU, JARVIS--BUT I DON'T THINK THAT'LL BE NECESSARY.
FEELING ANY BETTER, HERCULES?

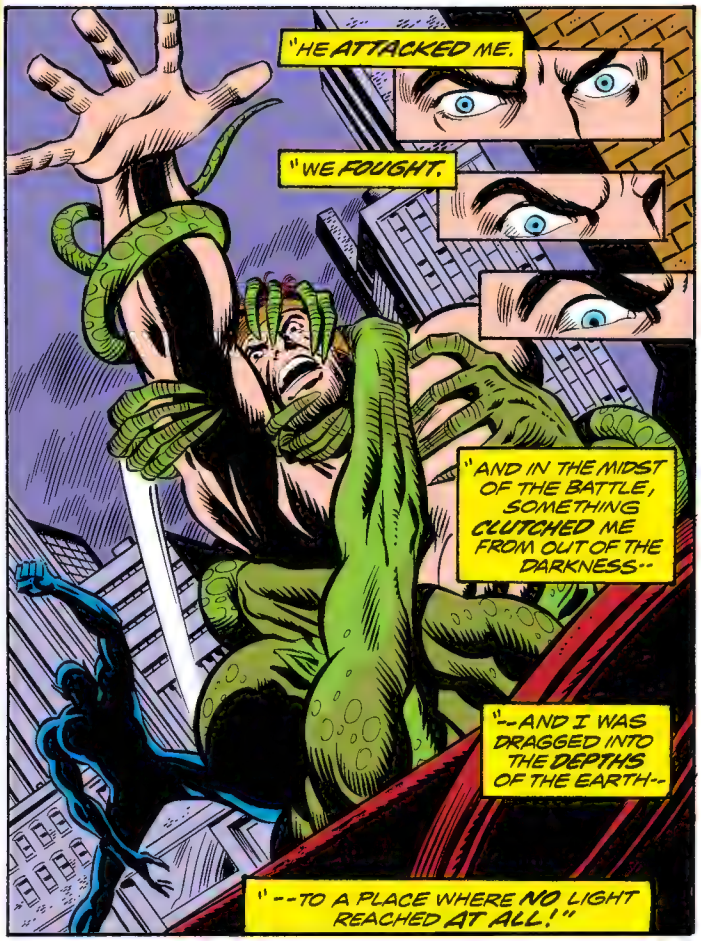

AS WELL AS I CAN FEEL, WITH THESE VISIONS HAUNTING MY BRAIN.
DID I TRULY SEE WHAT I REMEMBER SEEING-- OR WAS IT ONLY ANOTHER DELUSION--
-- THE IMAGININGS OF A MIND INSANE?
THOU MUST NOT TORMENT THYSELF, HERCULES.

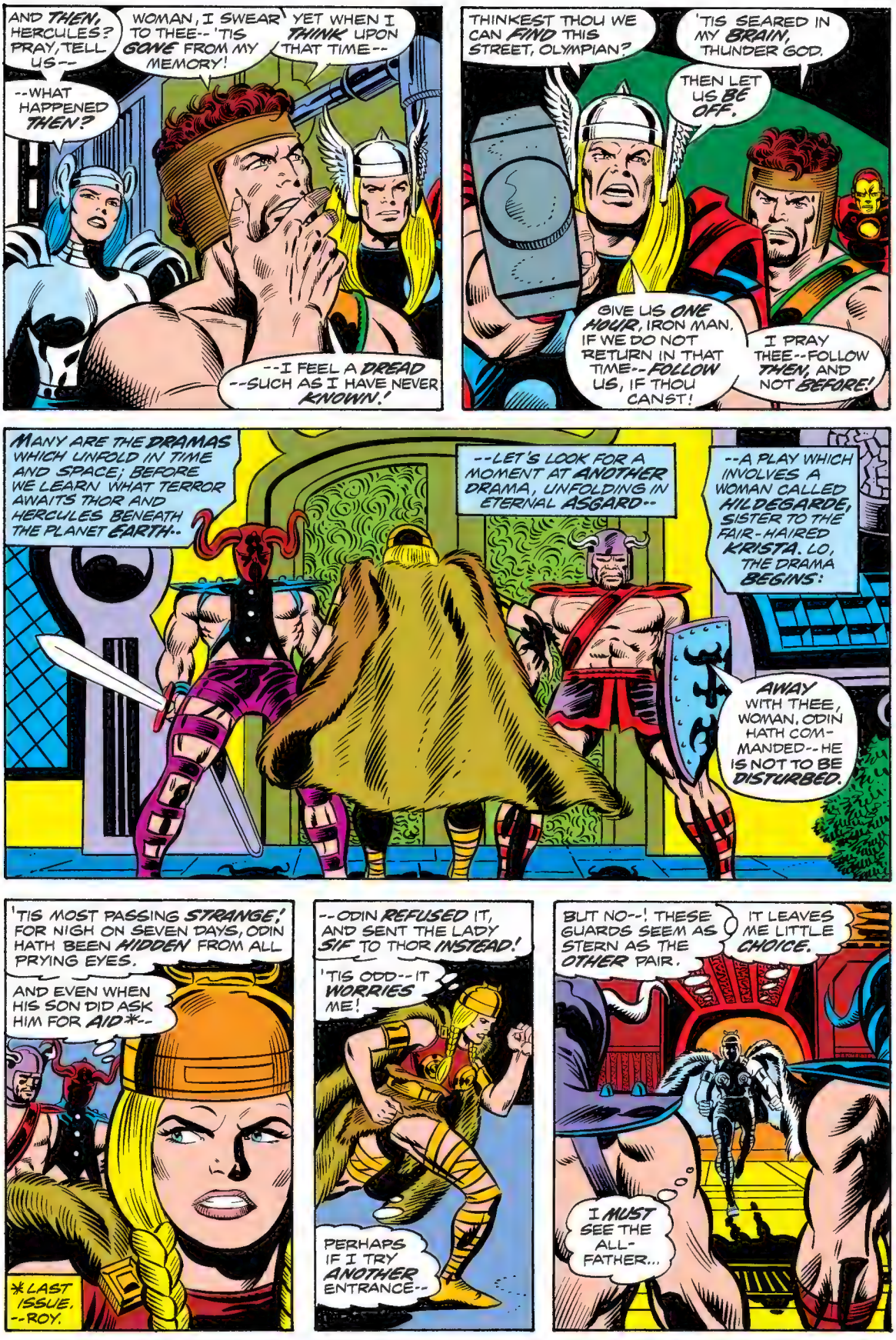
TORMENT? WHAT CANST THOU KNOW OF TORMENT?
BY MY SOUL, I'VE ALWAYS COUNTED MYSELF A BRAVE MAN--
BUT CAN EVEN BRAVERY MATTER, 'GAINST THE FOULNESS I HAVE SEEN?

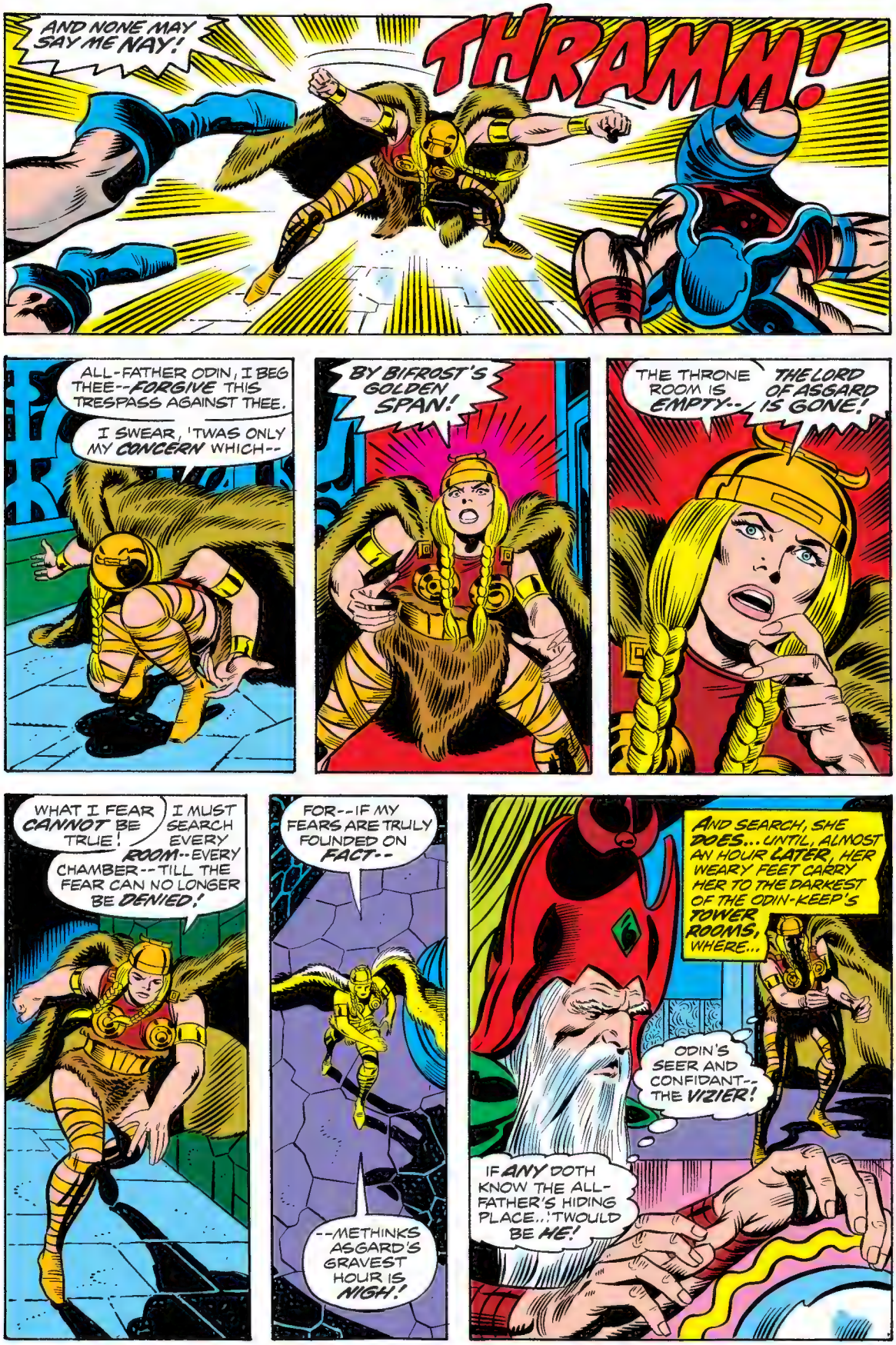

"IT BEGAN SEVERAL HOURS AGO, IN EARLY EVENING, AS I LEFT THOR* AND WANDERED THROUGH THE DARKENED SIDESTREETS OF THIS CITY'S SLUM.
*LAST ISSUE.--ROY.

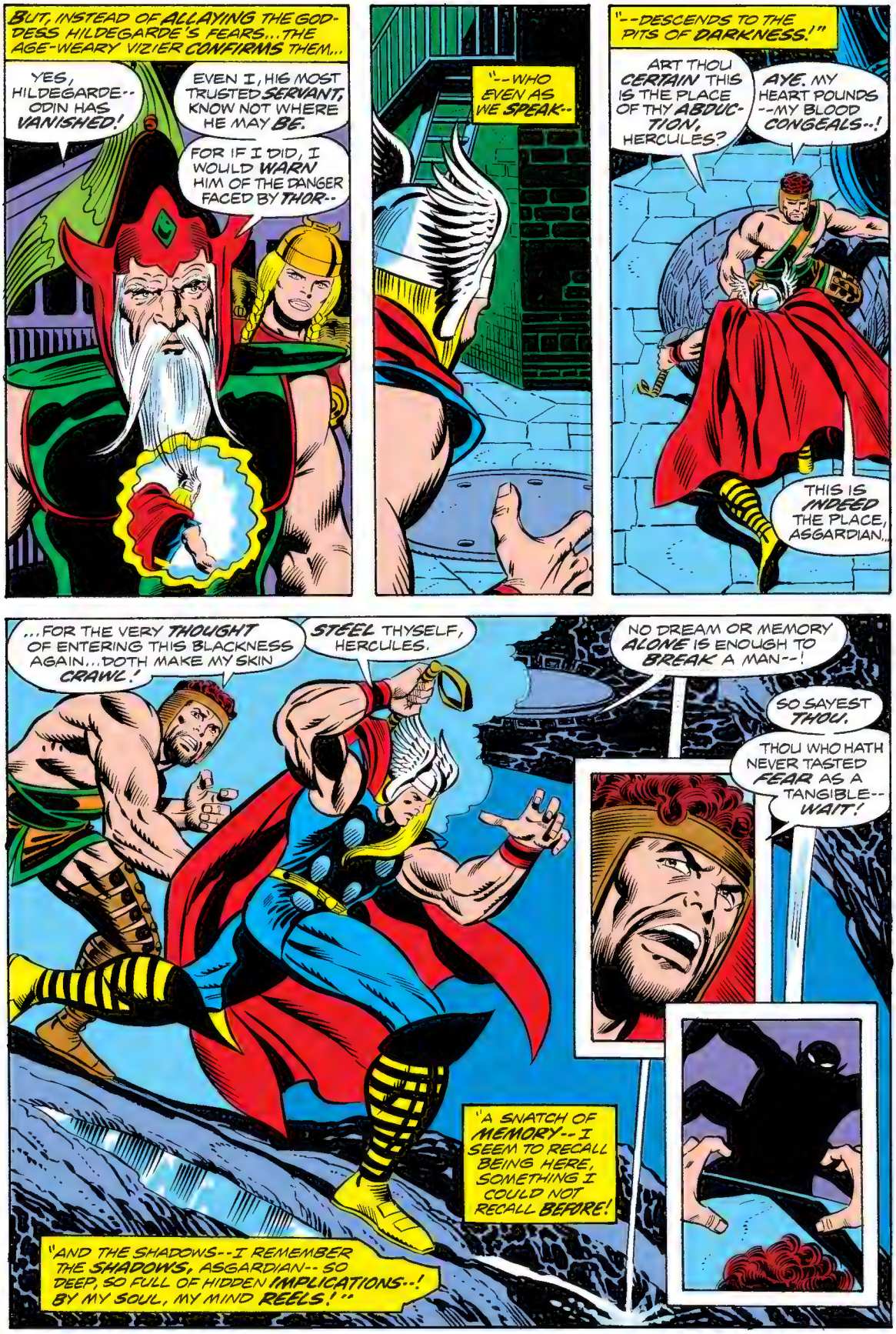

"I WAS FOLLOWED, BY A FIGURE WHOSE BODY WAS COMPLETELY OPAQUE, REFLECTING NO LIGHT--
--ABSORBING ALL LIGHT--

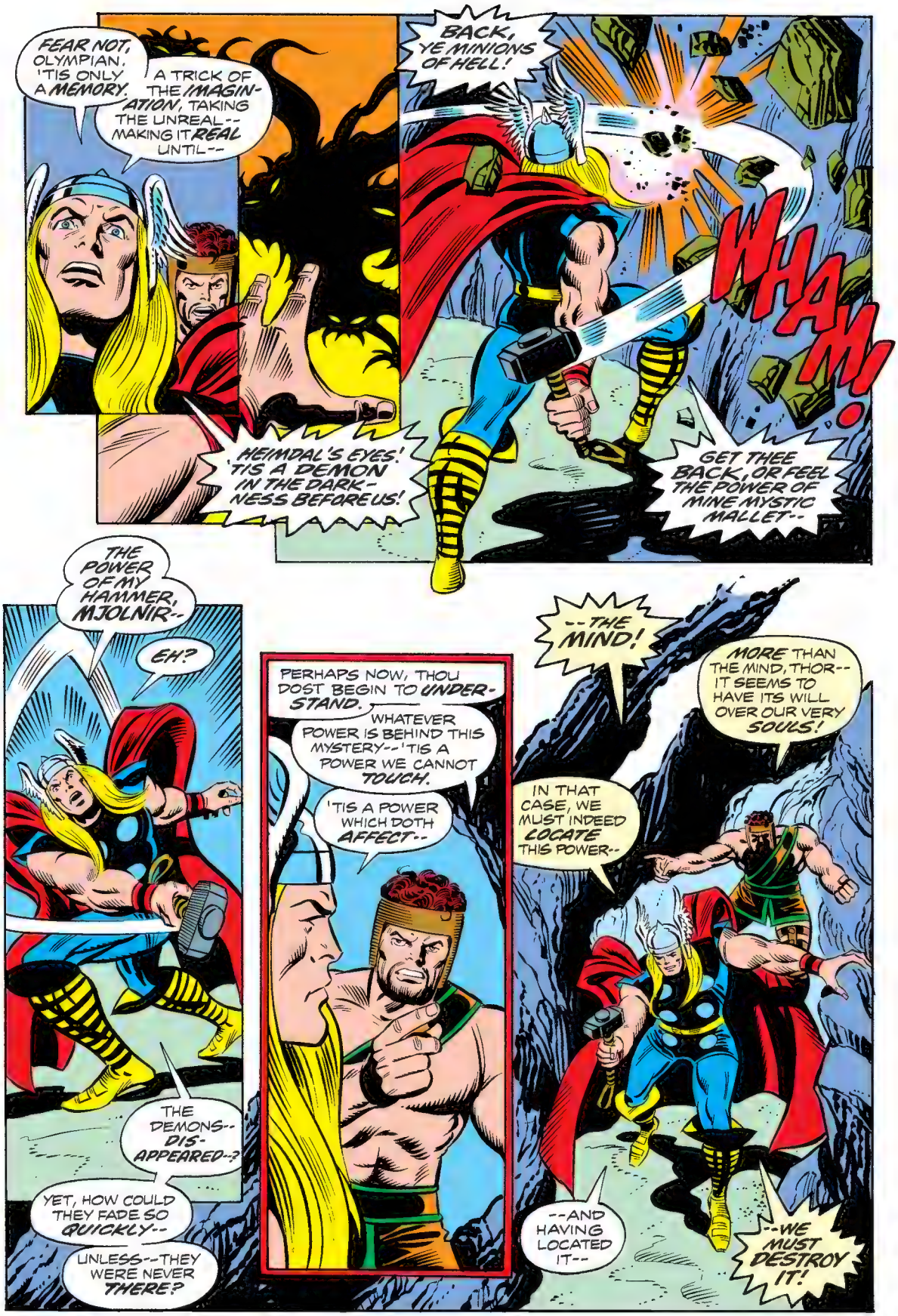
"--A MAN OF UTTER BLACKNESS, LIKE NOTHING IN THIS OR ANY OTHER WORLD!


"HE ATTACKED ME.
"WE FOUGHT.
"AND IN THE MIDST OF THE BATTLE, SOMETHING CLUTCHED ME FROM OUT OF THE DARKNESS--
"--AND I WAS DRAGGED INTO THE DEPTHS OF THE EARTH--
"--TO A PLACE WHERE NO LIGHT REACHED AT ALL!"


AND THEN, HERCULES? PRAY, TELL US--
--WHAT HAPPENED THEN?
WOMAN, I SWEAR TO THEE--'TIS GONE FROM MY MEMORY!
YET WHEN I THINK UPON THAT TIME--
--I FEEL A DREAD --SUCH AS I HAVE NEVER KNOWN!
THINKEST THOU WE CAN FIND THIS STREET, OLYMPIAN?
'TIS SEARED IN MY BRAIN, THUNDER GOD.
THEN LET US BE OFF.
GIVE US ONE HOUR, IRON MAN, IF WE DO NOT RETURN IN THAT TIME--FOLLOW US, IF THOU CANST!
I PRAY THEE--FOLLOW THEN, AND NOT BEFORE!
MANY ARE THE DRAMAS WHICH UNFOLD IN TIME AND SPACE; BEFORE WE LEARN WHAT TERROR AWAITS THOR AND HERCULES BENEATH THE PLANET EARTH..
--LET'S LOOK FOR A MOMENT AT ANOTHER DRAMA, UNFOLDING IN ETERNAL ASGARD--
--A PLAY WHICH INVOLVES A WOMAN CALLED HILDEGARDE, SISTER TO THE FAIR-HAIRED KRISTA. LO, THE DRAMA BEGINS:
AWAY WITH THEE, WOMAN, ODIN HATH COMMANDED--HE IS NOT TO BE DISTURBED.
'TIS MOST PASSING STRANGE! FOR NIGH ON SEVEN DAYS, ODIN HATH BEEN HIDDEN FROM ALL PRYING EYES.
AND EVEN WHEN HIS SON DID ASK HIM FOR AID*--
*LAST ISSUE, --ROY.
--ODIN REFUSED IT, AND SENT THE LADY SIF TO THOR INSTEAD!
'TIS ODD--IT WORRIES ME!
PERHAPS IF I TRY ANOTHER ENTRANCE--
BUT NO--! THESE GUARDS SEEM AS STERN AS THE OTHER PAIR.
IT LEAVES ME LITTLE CHOICE.
I MUST SEE THE ALL-FATHER...

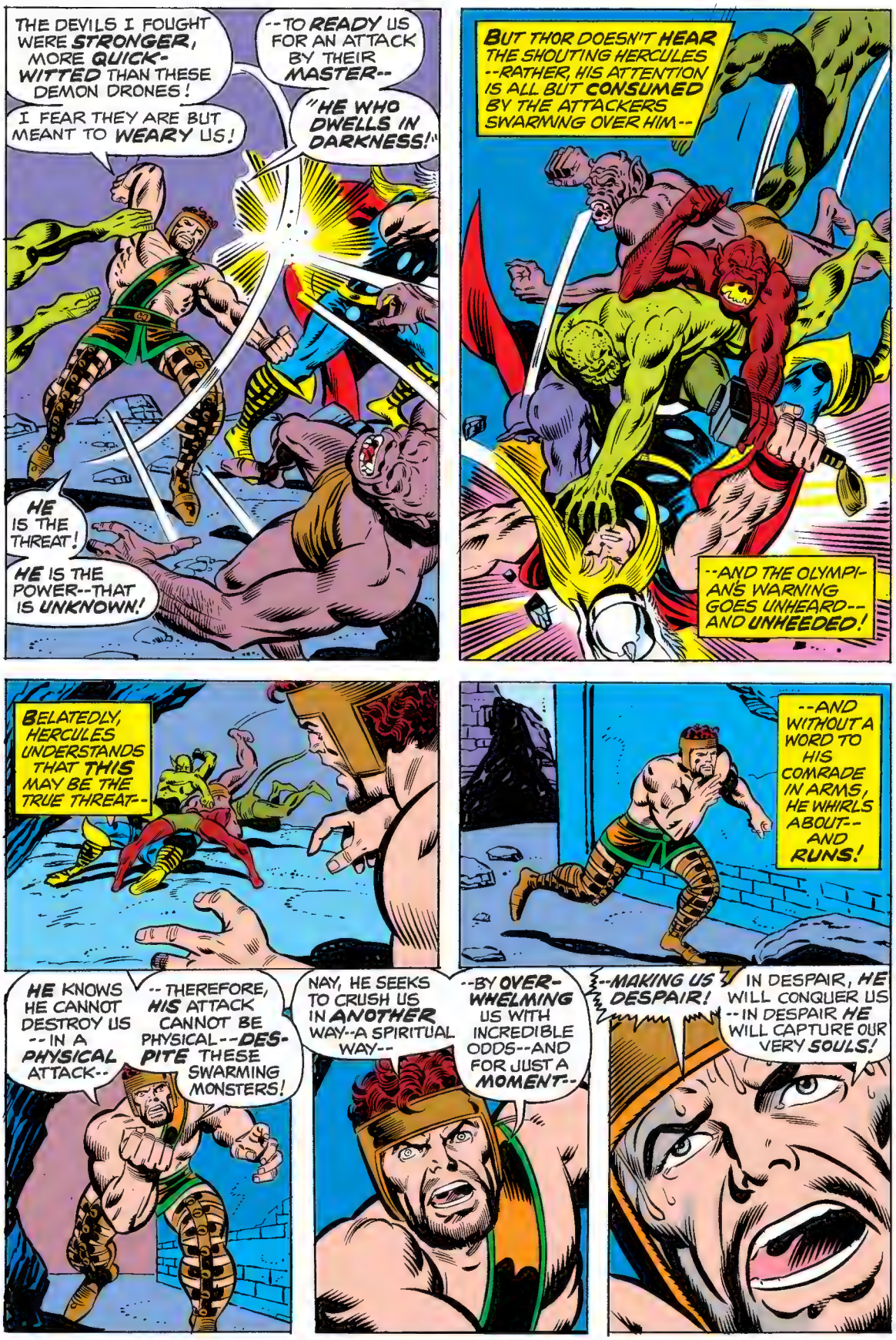

AND NONE MAY SAY ME NAY!
THRAMM!
ALL-FATHER ODIN, I BEG THEE--FORGIVE THIS TRESPASS AGAINST THEE.
I SWEAR, 'TWAS ONLY MY CONCERN WHICH--
BY BIFROST'S GOLDEN SPAN!
THE THRONE ROOM IS EMPTY--
THE LORD OF ASGARD IS GONE!
WHAT I FEAR CANNOT BE TRUE!
I MUST SEARCH EVERY ROOM--EVERY CHAMBER--TILL THE FEAR CAN NO LONGER BE DENIED!
FOR--IF MY FEARS ARE TRULY FOUNDED ON FACT--
--METHINKS ASGARD'S GRAVEST HOUR IS NIGH!
AND SEARCH, SHE DOES... UNTIL, ALMOST AN HOUR LATER, HER WEARY FEET CARRY HER TO THE DARKEST OF THE ODIN-KEEP'S TOWER ROOMS, WHERE...
ODIN'S SEER AND CONFIDANT--THE VIZIER!
IF ANY DOTH KNOW THE ALL-FATHER'S HIDING PLACE..'TWOULD BE HE!


BUT, INSTEAD OF ALLAYING THE GODDESS HILDEGARDE'S FEARS...THE AGE-WEARY VIZIER CONFIRMS THEM...
YES, HILDEGARDE--ODIN HAS VANISHED!
EVEN I, HIS MOST TRUSTED SERVANT, KNOW NOT WHERE HE MAY BE.
FOR IF I DID, I WOULD WARN HIM OF THE DANGER FACED BY THOR--
"--WHO EVEN AS WE SPEAK--
"--DESCENDS TO THE PITS OF DARKNESS!"
ART THOU CERTAIN THIS IS THE PLACE OF THY ABDUCTION, HERCULES?
AYE. MY HEART POUNDS --MY BLOOD CONGEALS--!
THIS IS INDEED THE PLACE, ASGARDIAN...
...FOR THE VERY THOUGHT OF ENTERING THIS BLACKNESS AGAIN...DOTH MAKE MY SKIN CRAWL!
STEEL THYSELF, HERCULES.
NO DREAM OR MEMORY ALONE IS ENOUGH TO BREAK A MAN--!
SO SAYEST THOU.
THOU WHO HATH NEVER TASTED FEAR AS A TANGIBLE--WAIT!
"A SNATCH OF MEMORY--I SEEM TO RECALL BEING HERE, SOMETHING I COULD NOT RECALL BEFORE!
"AND THE SHADOWS--I REMEMBER THE SHADOWS, ASGARDIAN-- SO DEEP, SO FULL OF HIDDEN IMPLICATIONS--! BY MY SOUL, MY MIND REELS!"

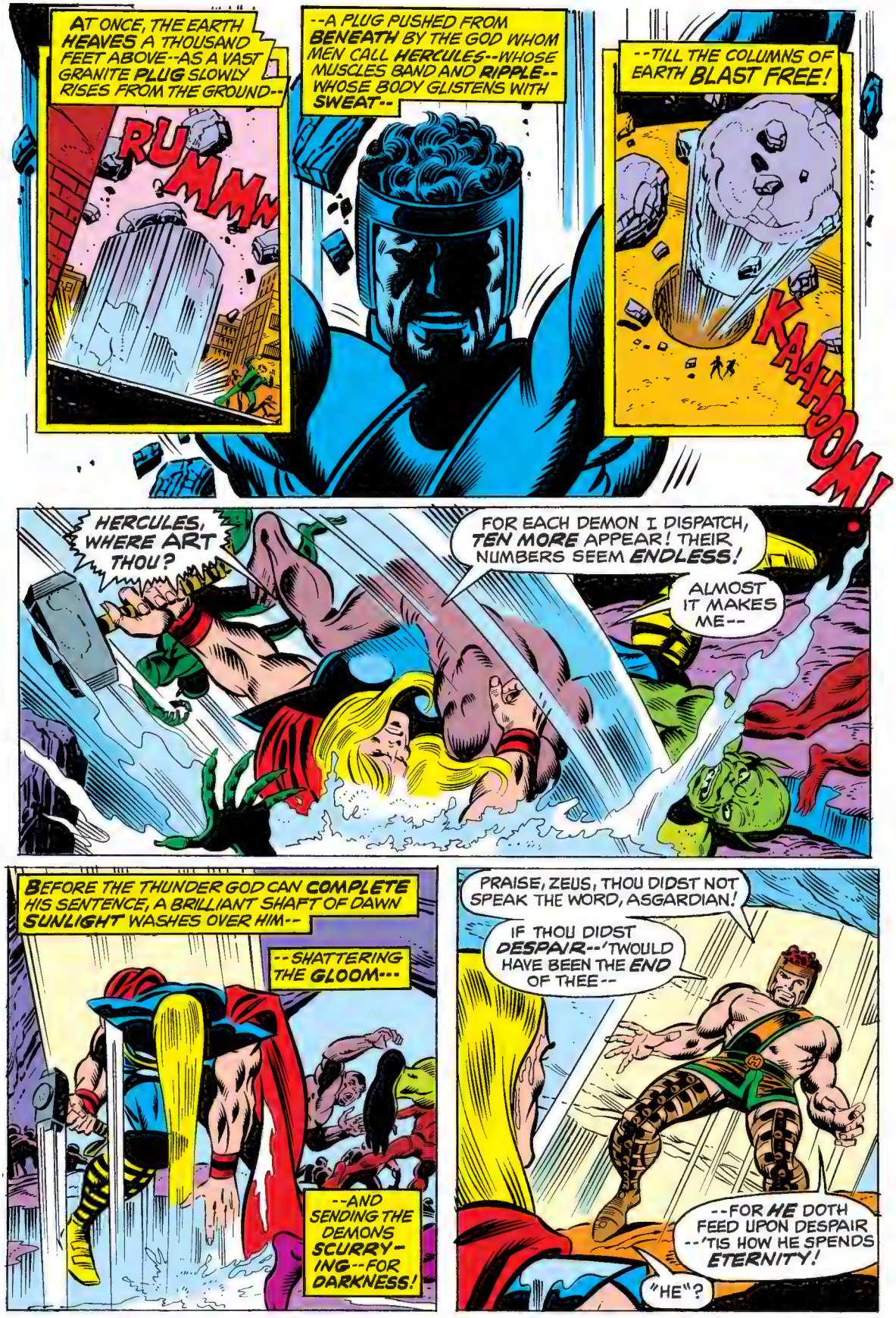

FEAR NOT, OLYMPIAN. 'TIS ONLY A MEMORY.
A TRICK OF THE IMAGINATION, TAKING THE UNREAL--MAKING IT REAL UNTIL--
BACK, YE MINIONS OF HELL!
WHAM!
HEIMDAL'S EYES! 'TIS A DEMON IN THE DARKNESS BEFORE US!
GET THEE BACK, OR FEEL THE POWER OF MINE MYSTIC MALLET--
THE POWER OF MY HAMMER, MJOLNIR--
EH?
THE DEMONS--DISAPPEARED--?
YET, HOW COULD THEY FADE SO QUICKLY--
UNLESS--THEY WERE NEVER THERE?
PERHAPS NOW, THOU DOST BEGIN TO UNDERSTAND.
WHATEVER POWER IS BEHIND THIS MYSTERY--'TIS A POWER WE CANNOT TOUCH.
'TIS A POWER WHICH DOTH AFFECT--
--THE MIND!
MORE THAN THE MIND, THOR--IT SEEMS TO HAVE ITS WILL OVER OUR VERY SOULS!
IN THAT CASE, WE MUST INDEED LOCATE THIS POWER--
--AND HAVING LOCATED IT--
--WE MUST DESTROY IT!

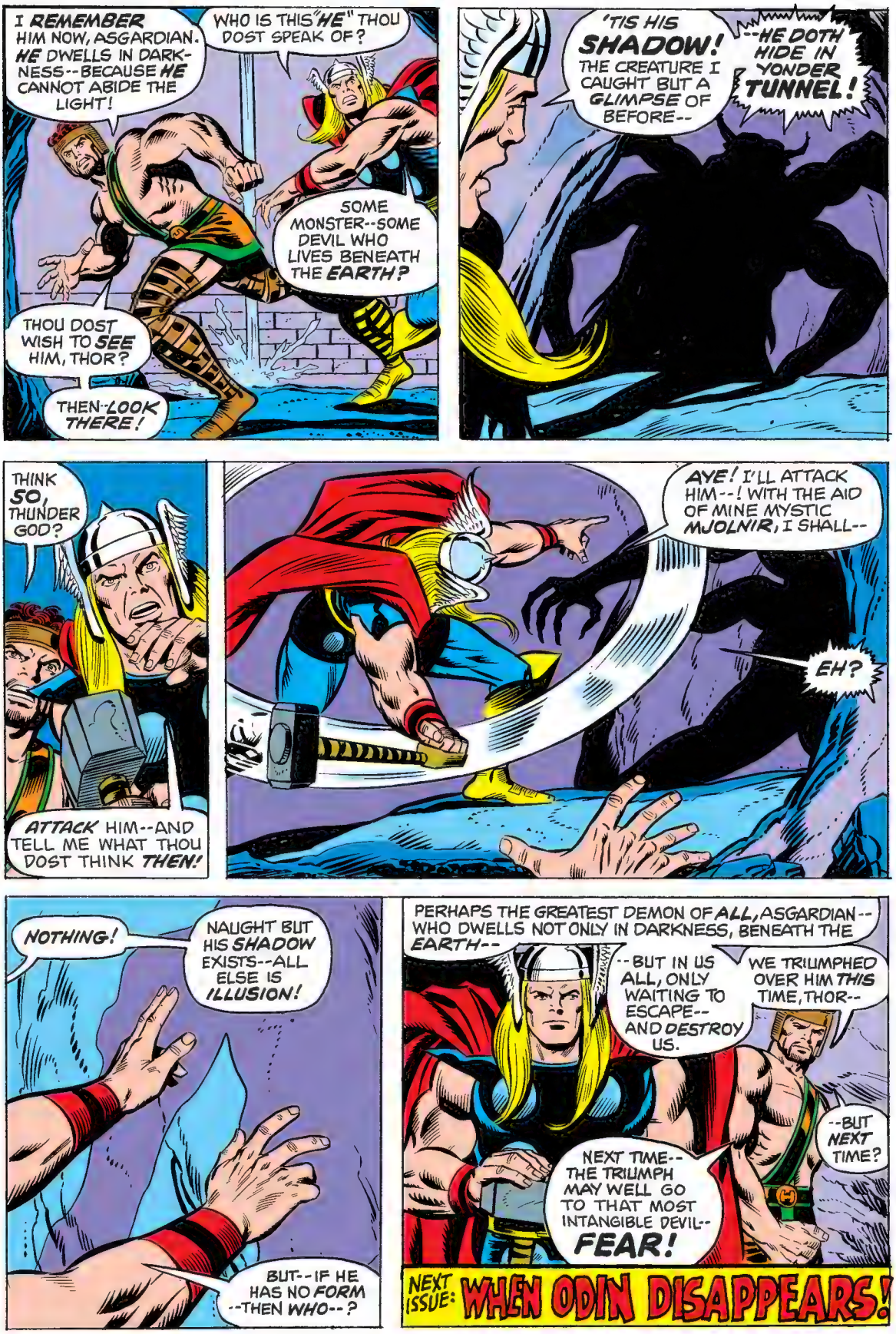
THE GRIM OLYMPIAN ONLY NODS IN ANSWER, AS HE CONTINUES TO LEAD THE WAY DOWNWARD THROUGH THE DARK ABYSS...DEEP INTO THE BEDROCK UNDERLYING THE CITY OF MANHATTAN...THROUGH A MAZE OF TUNNELS AND BURROWINGS WHICH IMPLY A HORROR GREATER THAN THOR EVER IMAGINED...
THEN, WHEN THE AIR--ALREADY STIFLING--HAS BECOME SO DENSE IT ALMOST SUFFOCATES...
HERCULES.. ....IN THE BECKONING GLOOM AHEAD...
DOST THOU SEE?
A SHAPE--A SHADOW--A FORM WITHOUT DIMENSION OR DEPTH--?
BY BIFROST'S RAINBOW SPAN--
--TIS AS THOUGH THE DARKNESS WERE ALIVE!
BUT HOLD! THE FORM DOTH VANISH--
--AND DOTH BECOME BUT A SHADOW ONCE MORE--
--AS THOUGH IT WERE BUT A TRICK OF MINE EYES--
--ONLY THIS, AND NOTHING MORE!
WE MUST BE WARY OF OUR SUSPICIONS, HERCULES. THEY'LL BETRAY US YET.
HERCULES..?

ODIN'S BLOOD! MATERIALIZING FROM ALL SIDES--
DEMONS--OF EVERY SIZE AND SHAPE!
THEN--TWAS NO ILLUSION--
AAARRR
--THE DARKNESS IS ALIVE--
--AND IT STRUGGLES AGAINST US--
--SEEKING OUR VERY LIVES!
KAPLOW!
WHAM!
NAY, THOR--THESE WERE NOT THE MONSTERS WHICH ATTACKED ME!
THEY ARE A LESSER BREED--QUICKLY ROUTED--
--EASILY DESTROYED!


THE DEVILS I FOUGHT WERE STRONGER, MORE QUICK-WITTED THAN THESE DEMON DRONES!
I FEAR THEY ARE BUT MEANT TO WEARY US!
--TO READY US FOR AN ATTACK BY THEIR MASTER--
"HE WHO DWELLS IN DARKNESS!"
HE IS THE THREAT!
HE IS THE POWER--THAT IS UNKNOWN!
BUT THOR DOESN'T HEAR THE SHOUTING HERCULES --RATHER, HIS ATTENTION IS ALL BUT CONSUMED BY THE ATTACKERS SWARMING OVER HIM--
--AND THE OLYMPIANS WARNING GOES UNHEARD--AND UNHEEDED!
BELATEDLY, HERCULES UNDERSTANDS THAT THIS MAY BE THE TRUE THREAT--
--AND WITHOUT A WORD TO HIS COMRADE IN ARMS, HE WHIRLS ABOUT--AND RUNS!
HE KNOWS HE CANNOT DESTROY US --IN A PHYSICAL ATTACK--
--THEREFORE, HIS ATTACK CANNOT BE PHYSICAL--DESPITE THESE SWARMING MONSTERS!
NAY, HE SEEKS TO CRUSH US IN ANOTHER WAY--A SPIRITUAL WAY--
--BY OVERWHELMING US WITH INCREDIBLE ODDS--AND FOR JUST A MOMENT--
--MAKING US DESPAIR!
IN DESPAIR, HE WILL CONQUER US --IN DESPAIR HE WILL CAPTURE OUR VERY SOULS!

MAY THE HALLOWED HIGH-LORDS OF OLYMPUS PROTECT ME--
THIS MUST NOT BE!
REACHING A NARROW POINT IN THE MUSTY TUNNEL, WHERE THE CEILING ALMOST MEETS THE RUBBLE-STREWN FLOOR--THE SON OF ZEUS THROWS HIS ARMS ABOVE HIS HEAD--
--PLANTS HIS FEET LIKE ROCK UPON THE ROCK--
--AND STRAINS UPWARD, WITH ALL THE MIGHT OF A GODLING BORN!


AT ONCE, THE EARTH HEAVES A THOUSAND FEET ABOVE--AS A VAST GRANITE PLUG SLOWLY RISES FROM THE GROUND--
RUMMM
--A PLUG PUSHED FROM BENEATH BY THE GOD WHOM MEN CALL HERCULES--WHOSE MUSCLES BAND AND RIPPLE--WHOSE BODY GLISTENS WITH SWEAT--
--TILL THE COLUMNS OF EARTH BLAST FREE!
KAAHOOM!
HERCULES, WHERE ART THOU?
FOR EACH DEMON I DISPATCH, TEN MORE APPEAR! THEIR NUMBERS SEEM ENDLESS!
ALMOST IT MAKES ME--
BEFORE THE THUNDER GOD CAN COMPLETE HIS SENTENCE, A BRILLIANT SHAFT OF DAWN SUNLIGHT WASHES OVER HIM--
--SHATTERING THE GLOOM---
--AND SENDING THE DEMONS SCURRY-ING--FOR DARKNESS!
PRAISE, ZEUS, THOU DIDST NOT SPEAK THE WORD, ASGARDIAN!
IF THOU DIDST DESPAIR--'TWOULD HAVE BEEN THE END OF THEE--
--FOR HE DOTH FEED UPON DESPAIR --'TIS HOW HE SPENDS ETERNITY!
"HE"?


I REMEMBER HIM NOW, ASGARDIAN. HE DWELLS IN DARKNESS--BECAUSE HE CANNOT ABIDE THE LIGHT!
WHO IS THIS "HE" THOU DOST SPEAK OF?
SOME MONSTER--SOME DEVIL WHO LIVES BENEATH THE EARTH?
THOU DOST WISH TO SEE HIM, THOR?
THEN--LOOK THERE!
'TIS HIS SHADOW! THE CREATURE I CAUGHT BUT A GLIMPSE OF BEFORE--
--HE DOTH HIDE IN YONDER TUNNEL!
THINK SO, THUNDER GOD?
ATTACK HIM--AND TELL ME WHAT THOU DOST THINK THEN!
AYE! I'LL ATTACK HIM--! WITH THE AID OF MINE MYSTIC MJOLNIR, I SHALL--
EH?
NOTHING!
NAUGHT BUT HIS SHADOW EXISTS--ALL ELSE IS ILLUSION!
BUT--IF HE HAS NO FORM --THEN WHO--?
PERHAPS THE GREATEST DEMON OF ALL, ASGARDIAN--WHO DWELLS NOT ONLY IN DARKNESS, BENEATH THE EARTH--
--BUT IN US ALL, ONLY WAITING TO ESCAPE--AND DESTROY US.
WE TRIUMPHED OVER HIM THIS TIME, THOR--
--BUT NEXT TIME?
NEXT TIME--THE TRIUMPH MAY WELL GO TO THAT MOST INTANGIBLE DEVIL--FEAR!
NEXT ISSUE: WHEN ODIN DISAPPEARS!

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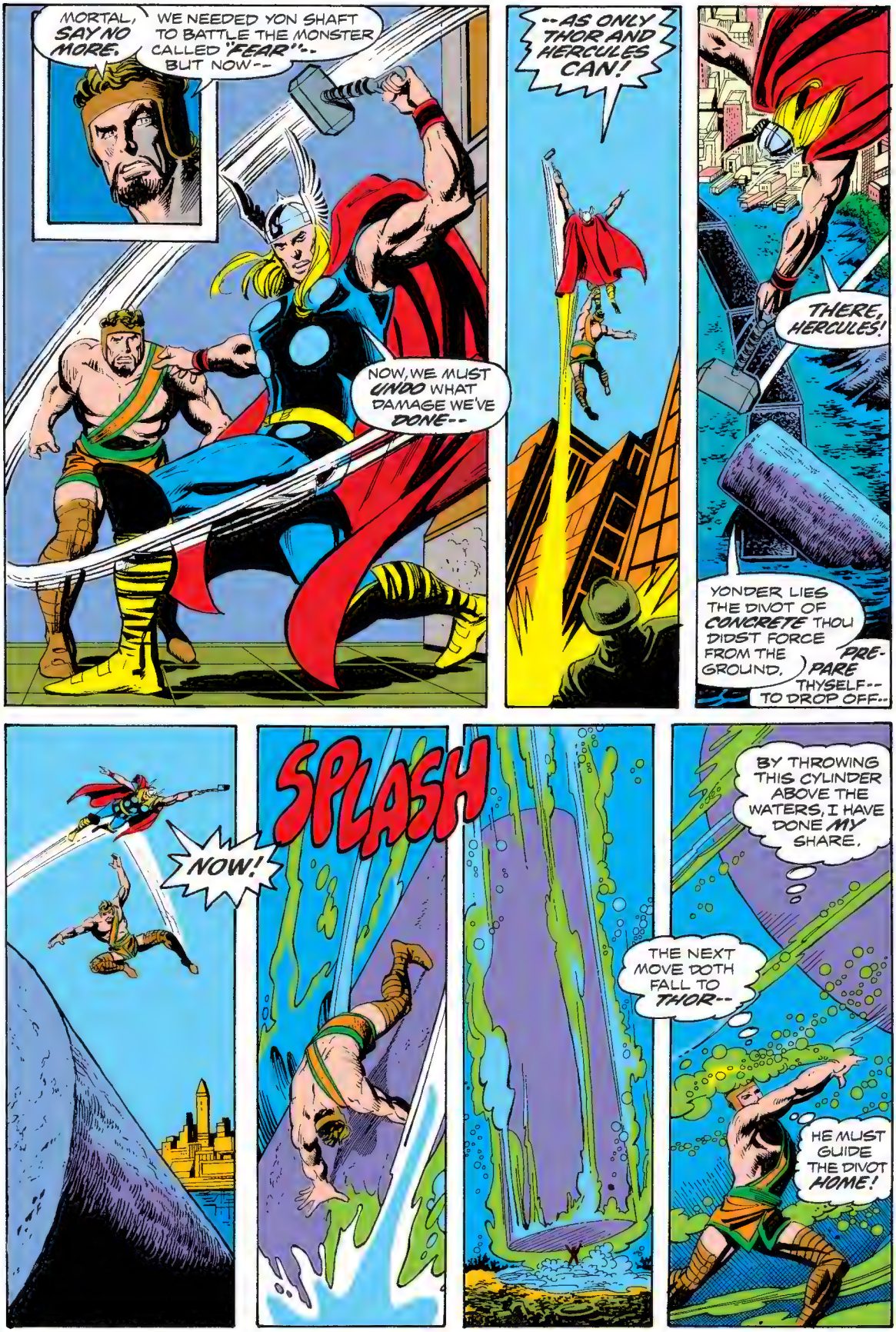
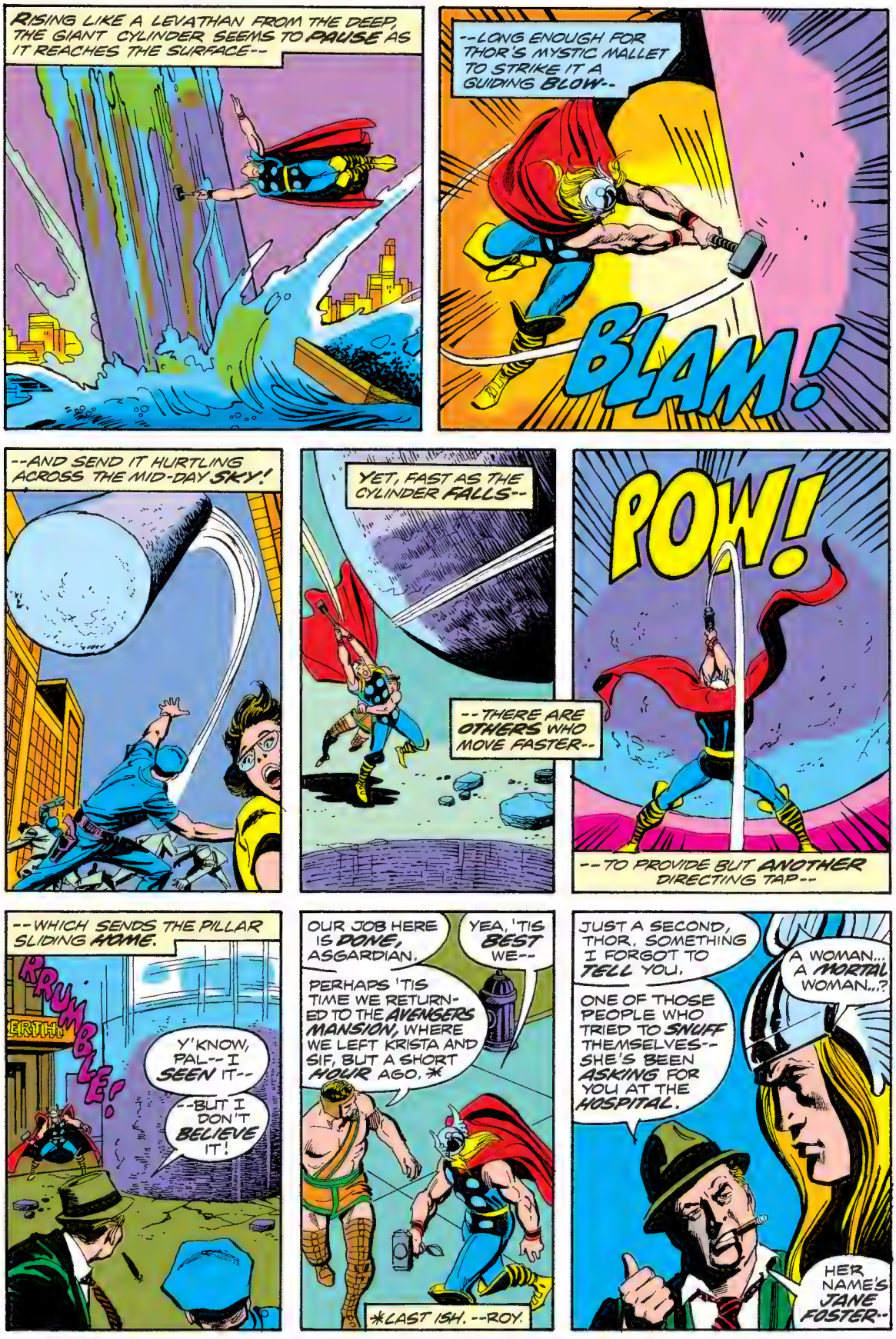
THE MIGHTY
THOR
IT'S MAN-MONSTER VS. THUNDER-GOD... FEATURING THE SENSATIONAL RETURN OF THE MOST UNEXPECTED CHARACTER OF ALL!
"A SPECTRE FROM THE PAST!"

Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE MIGHTY THOR!™
A SPECTRE from the PAST!
FEATURING: THE UNEXPECTED RETURN OF--WELL, WHY DON'TCHA JUST READ THE STORY AND FIND OUT, OKAY, TRUE BELIEVER?
GERRY CONWAY, AUTHOR
JOHN BUSCEMA & DICK GIORDANO ARTISTS EXTRAODINAIR
JOHN COSTANZA / letterer
P. GOLDBERG colorist
ROY THOMAS, EDITOR

'TIS HARD FOR ME TO BELIEVE THE BATTLE IS TRULY OVER, THUNDER GOD.
YET--'TIS INDEED THE EARTH I FEEL BENEATH ME--
--AND IT FEELS SOLID--AND STRONG!
I KNOW THY FEELINGS WELL, HERCULES.
AFTER OUR STRUGGLE BENEATH THE EARTH,* 'TIS A PLEASURE TO BE UPON IT ONCE MORE.
HOLD.
WE ARE APPROACHED, THOR.
HIYA, FELLAS!
*DETAILED LAST ISSUE.--ROY.
SAY, I'VE REALLY GOT TO CONGRATULATE YOU GUYS ON THE JOB YOU DID.
WE HAD A COUPLE OF NUT-CASES IN BELLEVUE, FOLKS WHO WERE ACTING LIKE THOSE OTHER CRAZIES I TOLD YOU ABOUT YESTERDAY*--
*MEANING THOR #229.--ROY
--AND AS SOON AS YOU FELLAS WENT OFF AND STARTED STIRRING THINGS UP, THOSE FOLKS SEEMED TO STRAIGHTEN OUT.
INSTEAD OF TRYING TO KILL THEMSELVES, LIKE THOSE OTHERS, THEY BEGAN COMPLAINING--SAYING THEY WERE BEING HELD AGAINST THEIR WILL.
AND IF THAT ISN'T A SIGN THAT THINGS ARE BACK TO NORMAL, WELL, FRIEND, THEN I DON'T KNOW WHAT IS.
THOU ART DETECTIVE SERGEANT BLUMKENN, ARE THOU NOT?
SURE, BUT YOU CAN CALL ME RALPH.
HEY, SERGEANT. WE'VE GOT A PROBLEM HERE.
THIS HERE SHAFT YOUR PALS KNOCKED OUT OF THE GROUND--IT'S HOLDING UP TRAFFIC PRETTY BAD.
AND THE WAY THE CITY TAKES IT'S TIME FIXING THINGS--IT COULD BE MONTHS BEFORE--
LISTEN, I HATE TO ASK THIS, GUYS...
CAUTION

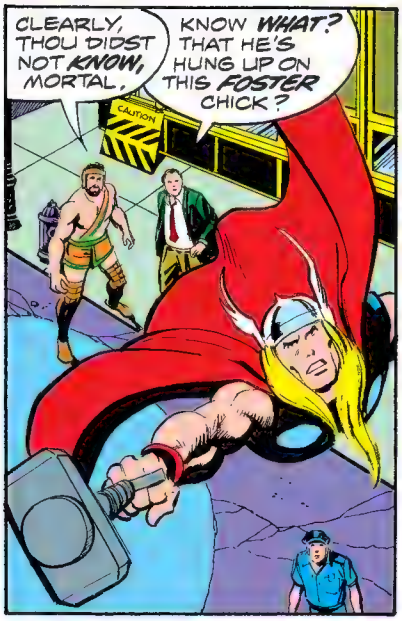

MORTAL, SAY NO MORE.
WE NEEDED YON SHAFT TO BATTLE THE MONSTER CALLED "FEAR"-- BUT NOW--
NOW, WE MUST UNDO WHAT DAMAGE WE'VE DONE--
--AS ONLY THOR AND HERCULES CAN!
THERE, HERCULES!
YONDER LIES THE DIVOT OF CONCRETE THOU DIDST FORCE FROM THE GROUND. PREPARE THYSELF-- TO DROP OFF--
NOW!
SPLASH
BY THROWING THIS CYLINDER ABOVE THE WATERS, I HAVE DONE MY SHARE.
THE NEXT MOVE DOTH FALL TO THOR--
HE MUST GUIDE THE DIVOT HOME!

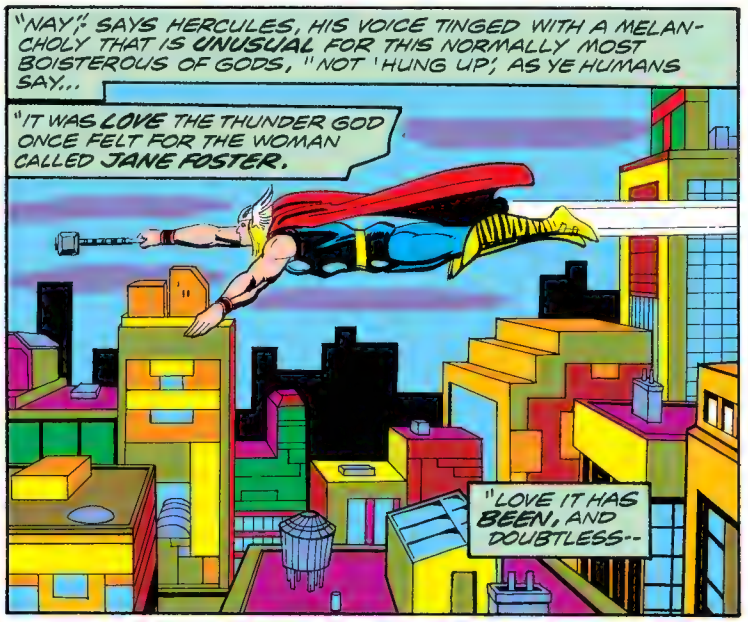

RISING LIKE A LEVATHAN FROM THE DEEP, THE GIANT CYLINDER SEEMS TO PAUSE AS IT REACHES THE SURFACE--
--LONG ENOUGH FOR THOR'S MYSTIC MALLET TO STRIKE IT A GUIDING BLOW--
BLAM!
--AND SEND IT HURTLING ACROSS THE MID-DAY SKY!
YET, FAST AS THE CYLINDER FALLS--
--THERE ARE OTHERS WHO MOVE FASTER--
POW!
--TO PROVIDE BUT ANOTHER DIRECTING TAP--
--WHICH SENDS THE PILLAR SLIDING HOME.
KRUMBLE!
ERTH!
Y'KNOW, PAL--I SEEN IT--
--BUT I DON'T BELIEVE IT!
OUR JOB HERE IS DONE, ASGARDIAN.
YEA, 'TIS BEST WE--
PERHAPS 'TIS TIME WE RETURNED TO THE AVENGERS MANSION, WHERE WE LEFT KRISTA AND SIF, BUT A SHORT HOUR AGO. *
*LAST ISH. --ROY.
JUST A SECOND, THOR. SOMETHING I FORGOT TO TELL YOU.
A WOMAN... A MORTAL WOMAN...?
ONE OF THOSE PEOPLE WHO TRIED TO SNUFF THEMSELVES--SHE'S BEEN ASKING FOR YOU AT THE HOSPITAL.
HER NAME'S JANE FOSTER--

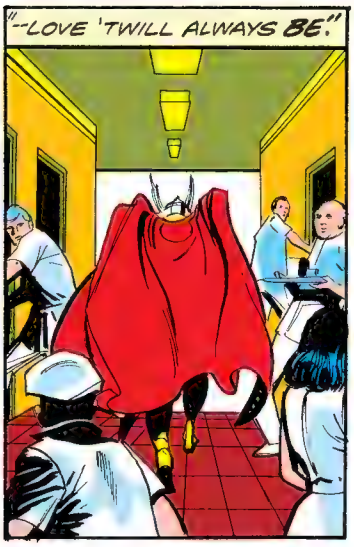
THAT NAME MEAN ANYTHING TO YOU?
JANE FOSTER...?

WHERE IS SHE, MORTAL?
ANSWER ME, OR I SWEAR I'LL--

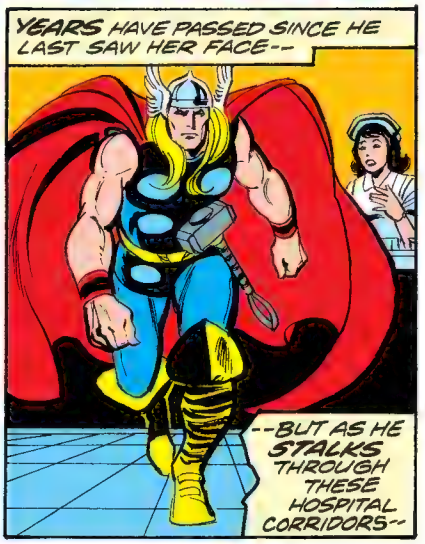
SHE'S AT THE MIDTOWN HOSPITAL--!
WHAT'S THE BIG--
UMMPHH!

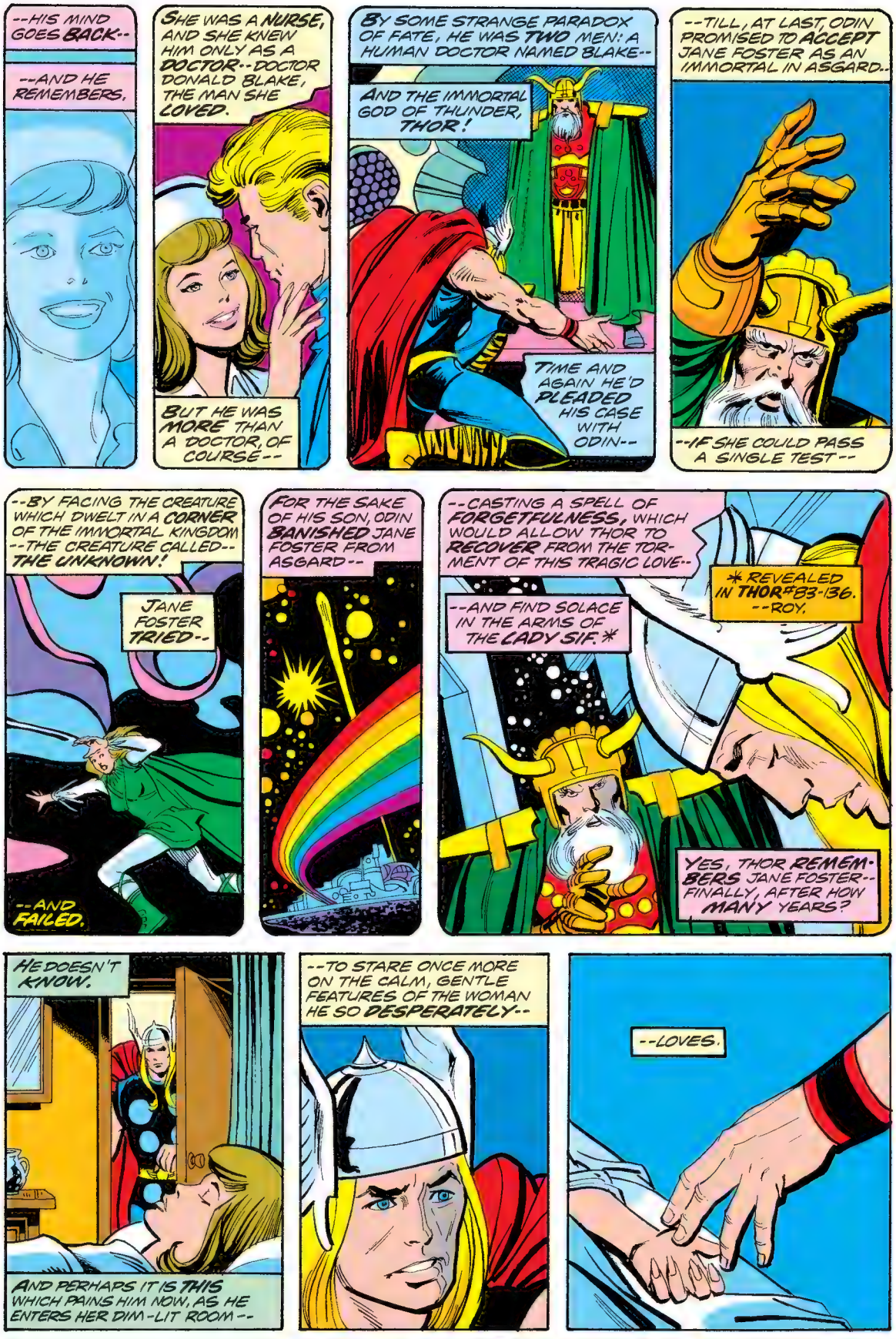

CLEARLY, THOU DIDST NOT KNOW, MORTAL,
KNOW WHAT? THAT HE'S HUNG UP ON THIS FOSTER CHICK?
CAUTION

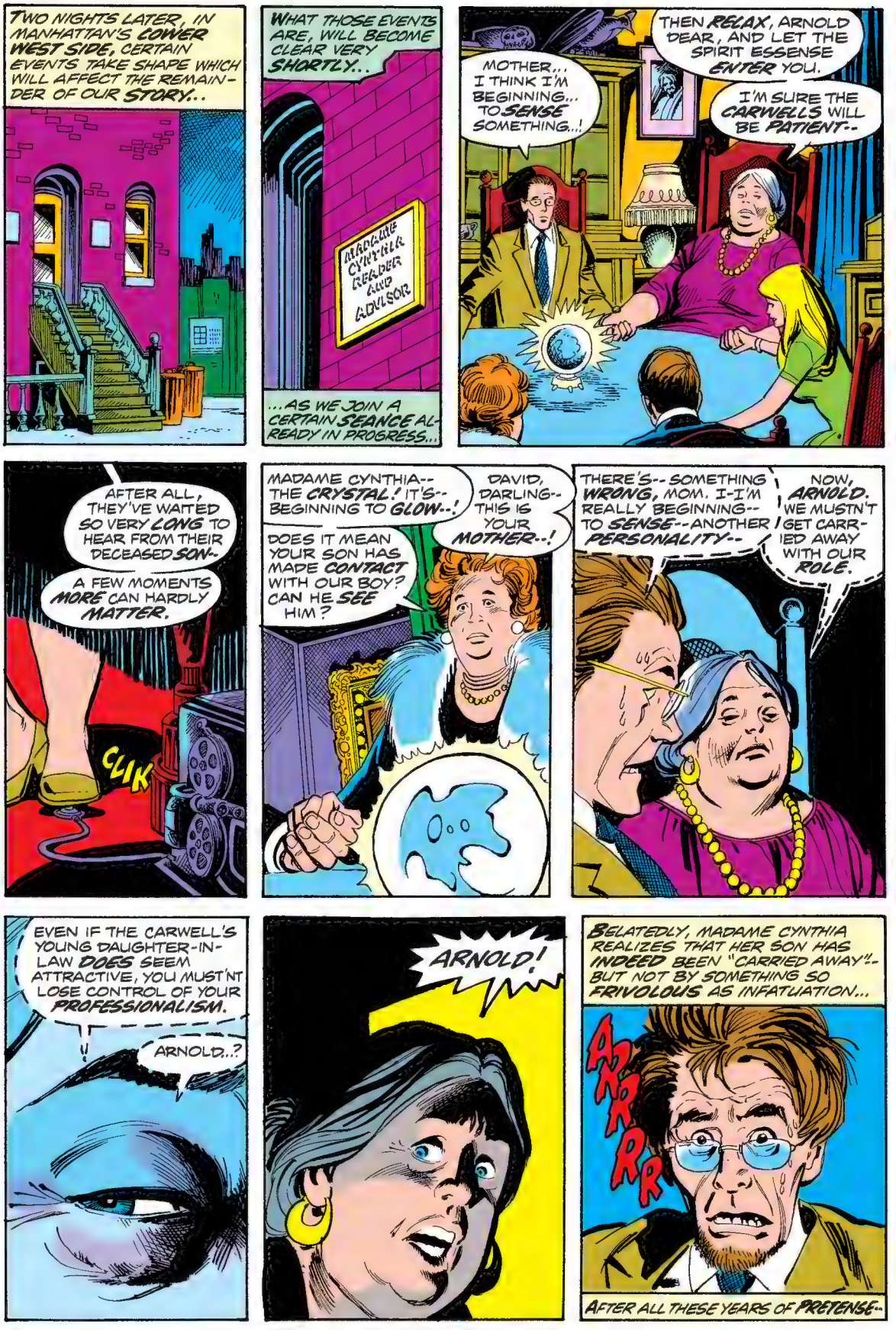

"NAY," SAYS HERCULES, HIS VOICE TINGED WITH A MELANCHOLY THAT IS UNUSUAL FOR THIS NORMALLY MOST BOISTEROUS OF GODS, "NOT 'HUNG UP', AS YE HUMANS SAY...
"IT WAS LOVE THE THUNDER GOD ONCE FELT FOR THE WOMAN CALLED JANE FOSTER.
"LOVE IT HAS BEEN, AND DOUBTLESS--


"--LOVE 'TWILL ALWAYS BE."

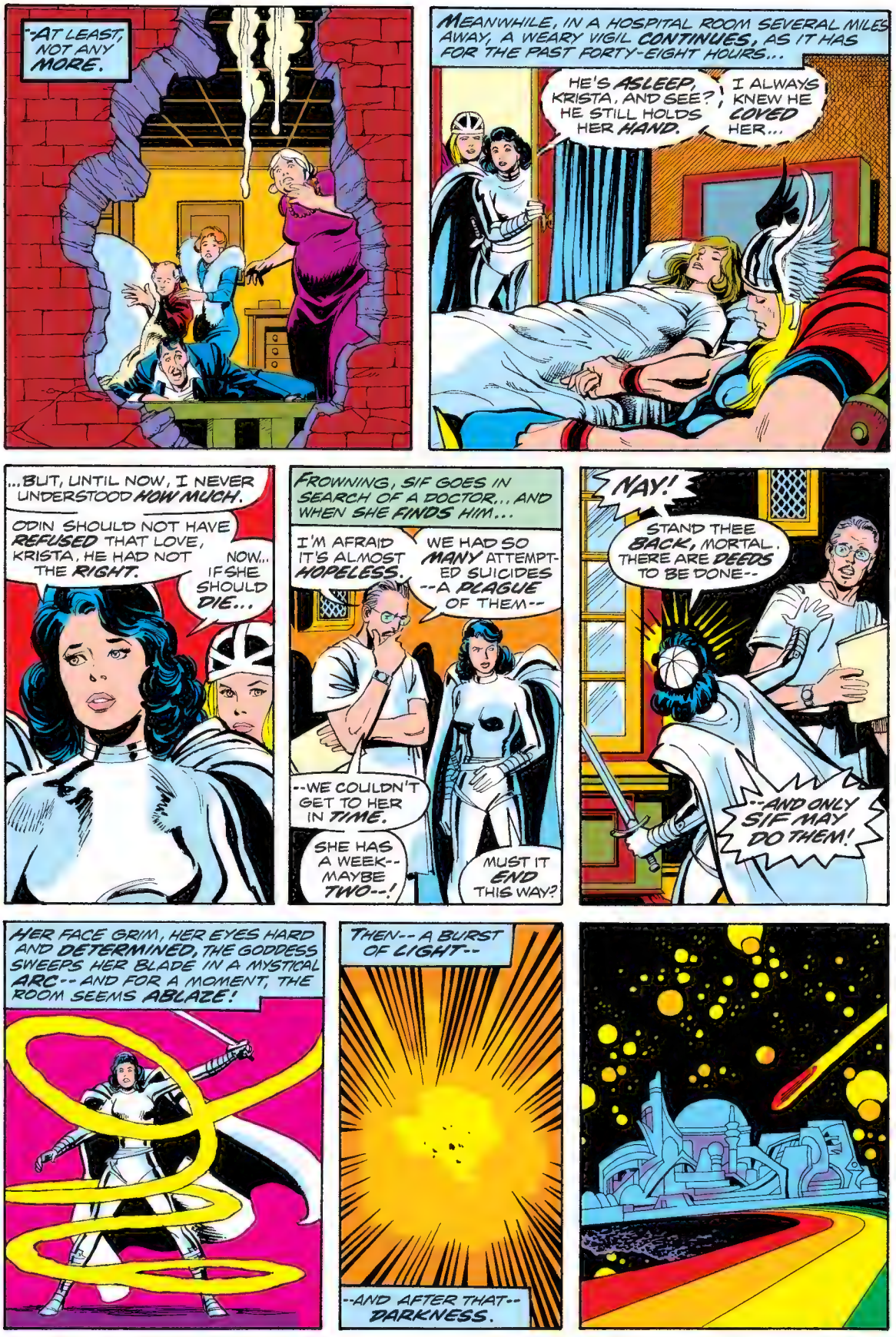
JANE FOSTER, NURSE. WHAT ROOM IS SHE IN?
TELL ME NOW, WOMAN--OR BY ALL THAT THE GODS HOLD HOLY, THOU WILT PAY FOR DELAYING ME!
R-ROOM 672.

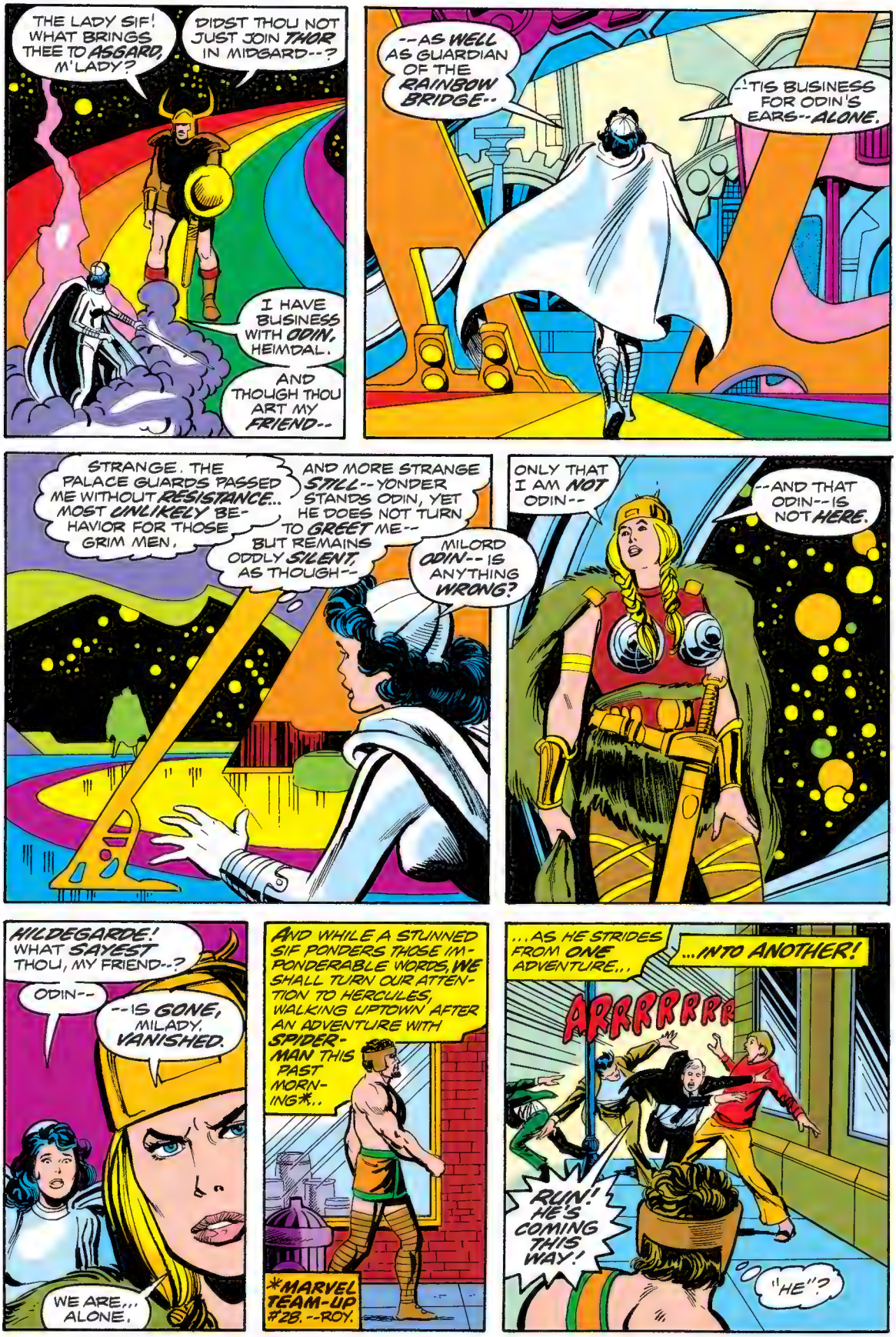

YEARS HAVE PASSED SINCE HE LAST SAW HER FACE--
--BUT AS HE STALKS THROUGH THESE HOSPITAL CORRIDORS--


--HIS MIND GOES BACK--
--AND HE REMEMBERS.
SHE WAS A NURSE, AND SHE KNEW HIM ONLY AS A DOCTOR--DOCTOR DONALD BLAKE, THE MAN SHE LOVED.
BUT HE WAS MORE THAN A DOCTOR, OF COURSE--
BY SOME STRANGE PARADOX OF FATE, HE WAS TWO MEN: A HUMAN DOCTOR NAMED BLAKE--
AND THE IMMORTAL GOD OF THUNDER, THOR!
TIME AND AGAIN HE'D PLEADED HIS CASE WITH ODIN--
--TILL, AT LAST, ODIN PROMISED TO ACCEPT JANE FOSTER AS AN IMMORTAL IN ASGARD..
--IF SHE COULD PASS A SINGLE TEST--
--BY FACING THE CREATURE WHICH DWELT IN A CORNER OF THE IMMORTAL KINGDOM --THE CREATURE CALLED-- THE UNKNOWN!
JANE FOSTER TRIED--
--AND FAILED.
FOR THE SAKE OF HIS SON, ODIN BANISHED JANE FOSTER FROM ASGARD--
--CASTING A SPELL OF FORGETFULNESS, WHICH WOULD ALLOW THOR TO RECOVER FROM THE TORMENT OF THIS TRAGIC LOVE--
--AND FIND SOLACE IN THE ARMS OF THE LADY SIF.*
* REVEALED IN THOR #83-136. --ROY.
YES, THOR REMEMBERS JANE FOSTER--FINALLY, AFTER HOW MANY YEARS?
HE DOESN'T KNOW.
AND PERHAPS IT IS THIS WHICH PAINS HIM NOW, AS HE ENTERS HER DIM-LIT ROOM--
--TO STARE ONCE MORE ON THE CALM, GENTLE FEATURES OF THE WOMAN HE SO DESPERATELY--
--LOVES.


TWO NIGHTS LATER, IN MANHATTAN'S LOWER WEST SIDE, CERTAIN EVENTS TAKE SHAPE WHICH WILL AFFECT THE REMAINDER OF OUR STORY...
WHAT THOSE EVENTS ARE, WILL BECOME CLEAR VERY SHORTLY...
MADAME CYNTHIA READER AND ADVISOR
...AS WE JOIN A CERTAIN SEANCE ALREADY IN PROGRESS...
MOTHER... I THINK I'M BEGINNING... TO SENSE SOMETHING...!
THEN RELAX, ARNOLD DEAR, AND LET THE SPIRIT ESSENSE ENTER YOU.
I'M SURE THE CARWELLS WILL BE PATIENT--
AFTER ALL, THEY'VE WAITED SO VERY LONG TO HEAR FROM THEIR DECEASED SON--
A FEW MOMENTS MORE CAN HARDLY MATTER.
CLIK
MADAME CYNTHIA-- THE CRYSTAL! IT'S-- BEGINNING TO GLOW--!
DAVID, DARLING-- THIS IS YOUR MOTHER--!
DOES IT MEAN YOUR SON HAS MADE CONTACT WITH OUR BOY? CAN HE SEE HIM?
THERE'S-- SOMETHING WRONG, MOM. I-I'M REALLY BEGINNING-- TO SENSE-- ANOTHER PERSONALITY--
NOW, ARNOLD. WE MUSTN'T GET CARRIED AWAY WITH OUR ROLE.
EVEN IF THE CARWELL'S YOUNG DAUGHTER-IN-LAW DOES SEEM ATTRACTIVE, YOU MUST'NT LOSE CONTROL OF YOUR PROFESSIONALISM.
ARNOLD...?
ARNOLD!
BELATEDLY, MADAME CYNTHIA REALIZES THAT HER SON HAS INDEED BEEN "CARRIED AWAY"-- BUT NOT BY SOMETHING SO FRIVOLOUS AS INFATUATION...
AARRR
AFTER ALL THESE YEARS OF PRETENSE...

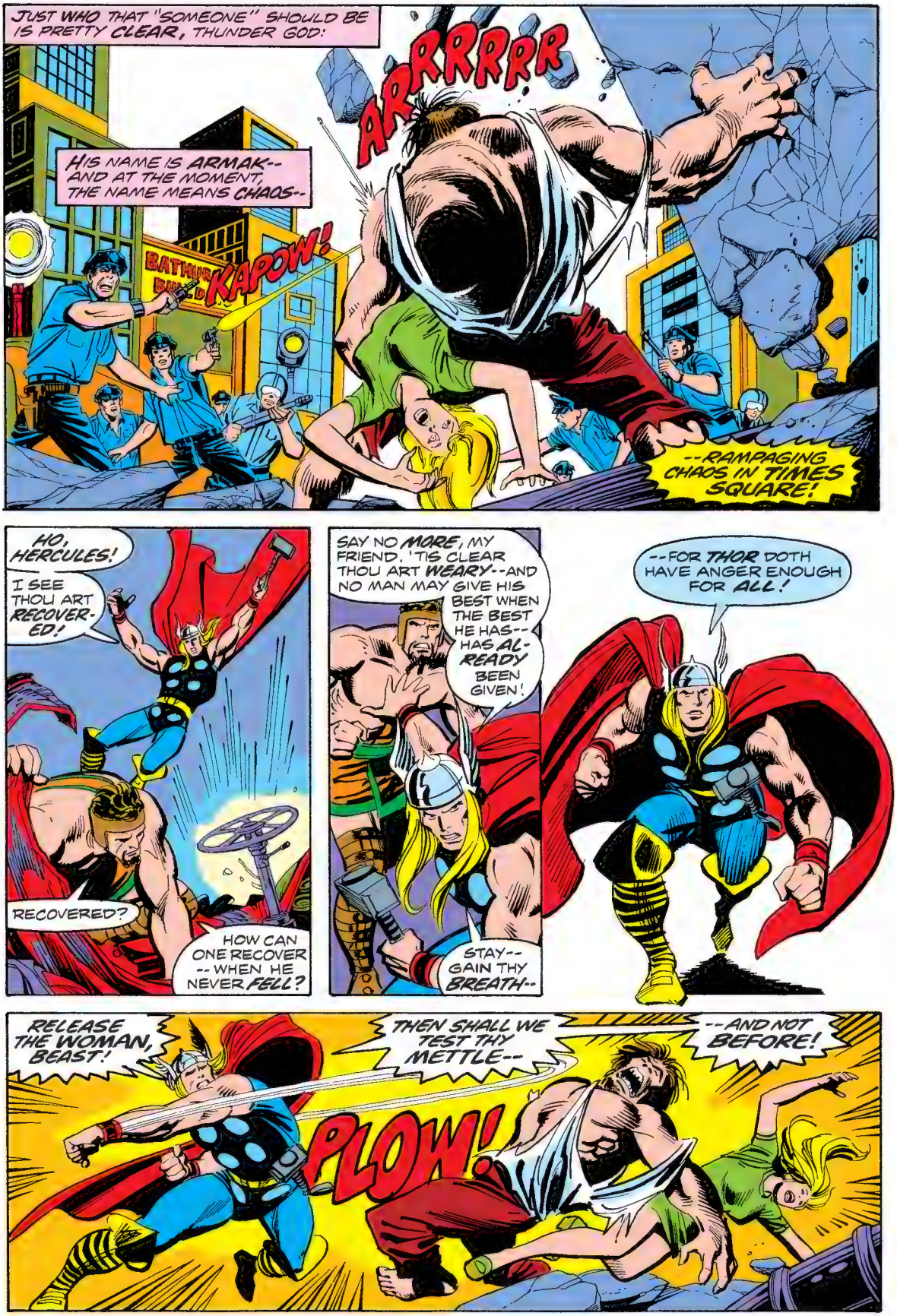
--ARNOLD NICOLSON HAS AT LAST MADE CONTACT WITH THE "SPIRIT WORLD"--
ARRRRRR
OR, PERHAPS IT WOULD BE MORE ACCURATE TO SAY--
LOOK AT HIM! HE'S CHANGING!
RRR
RR
--THE SPIRIT WORLD HAS MADE CONTACT WITH HIM!
AFTER THREE MILLION YEARS OF DARKNESS--
--THE LIGHT IS MINE ONCE MORE!
I LIVE!
CRASH!
ARMAK--FIRST MAN--STRONGEST MAN EVER BORN --BREATHES THE AIR--
--AND FINDS LIFE GOOD!
WITHOUT ANOTHER WORD, THE TRANSFORMED ARNOLD NICOLSON PLUNGES THROUGH THE BROWNSTONE WALL. BRICKS AND MORTAR RAIN ABOUT HIM, BUT HE SEEMS TO TAKE NO NOTICE.
THOMM!
WHATEVER HE IS, ONE THING'S CERTAIN-- ARNOLD NICOLSON ISN'T HUMAN--

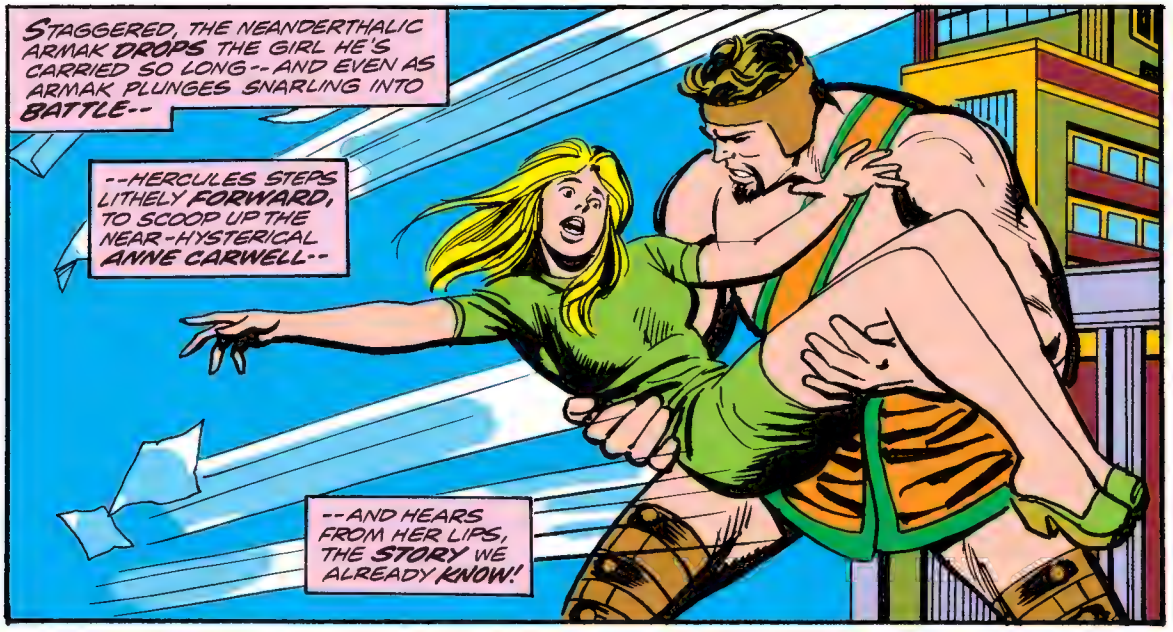

"AT LEAST, NOT ANY MORE.
MEANWHILE, IN A HOSPITAL ROOM SEVERAL MILES AWAY, A WEARY VIGIL CONTINUES, AS IT HAS FOR THE PAST FORTY-EIGHT HOURS...
HE'S ASLEEP, KRISTA, AND SEE? HE STILL HOLDS HER HAND.
I ALWAYS KNEW HE LOVED HER...
...BUT, UNTIL NOW, I NEVER UNDERSTOOD HOW MUCH.
ODIN SHOULD NOT HAVE REFUSED THAT LOVE, KRISTA, HE HAD NOT THE RIGHT.
NOW... IF SHE SHOULD DIE...
FROWNING, SIF GOES IN SEARCH OF A DOCTOR... AND WHEN SHE FINDS HIM...
I'M AFRAID IT'S ALMOST HOPELESS.
WE HAD SO MANY ATTEMPTED SUICIDES --A PLAGUE OF THEM--
--WE COULDN'T GET TO HER IN TIME.
SHE HAS A WEEK-- MAYBE TWO--!
MUST IT END THIS WAY?
NAY!
STAND THEE BACK, MORTAL. THERE ARE DEEDS TO BE DONE--
--AND ONLY SIF MAY DO THEM!
HER FACE GRIM, HER EYES HARD AND DETERMINED, THE GODDESS SWEEPS HER BLADE IN A MYSTICAL ARC-- AND FOR A MOMENT, THE ROOM SEEMS ABLAZE!
THEN-- A BURST OF LIGHT--
--AND AFTER THAT-- DARKNESS.

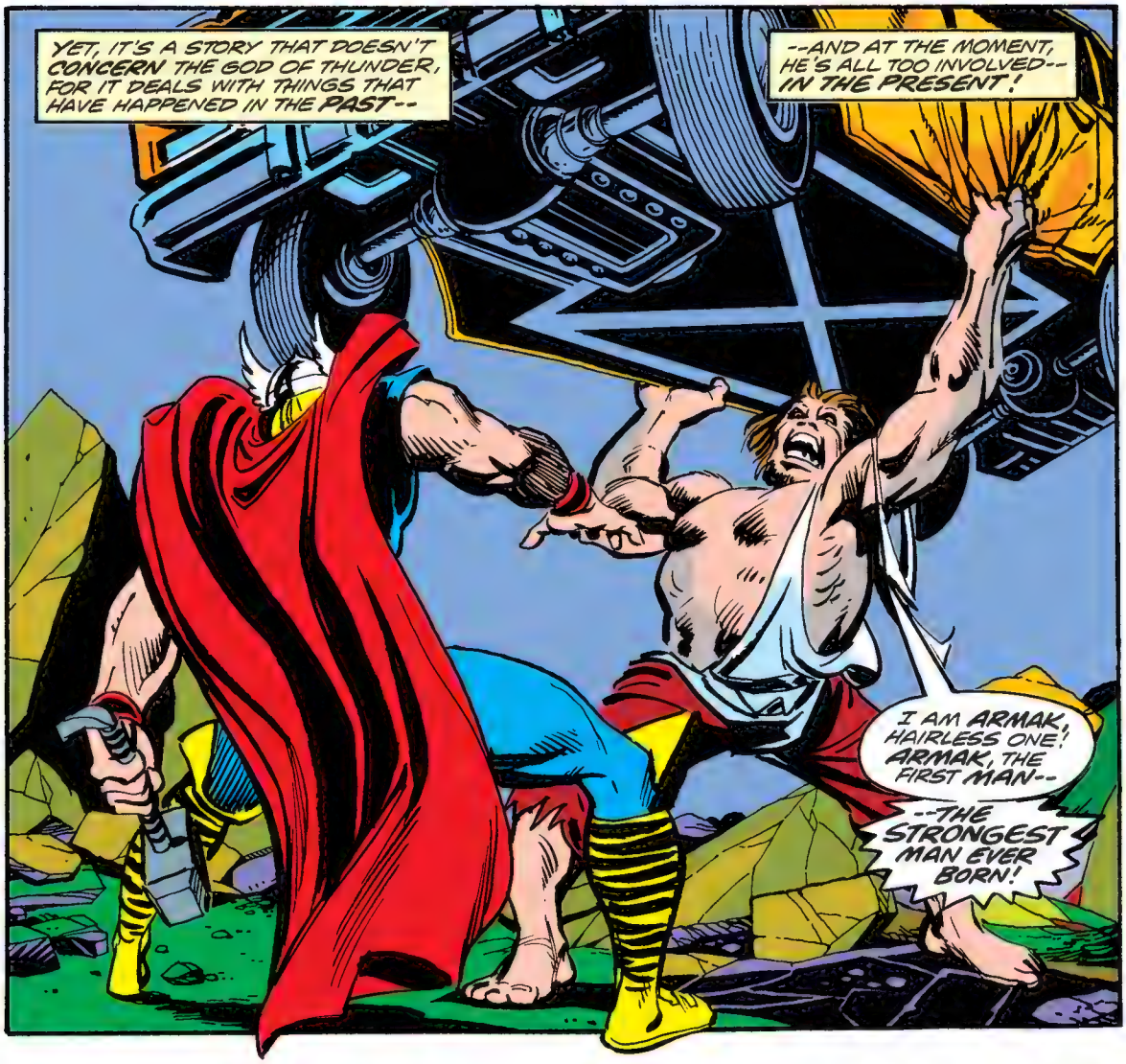

THE LADY SIF! WHAT BRINGS THEE TO ASGARD, M'LADY?
DIDST THOU NOT JUST JOIN THOR IN MIDGARD--?
I HAVE BUSINESS WITH ODIN, HEIMDAL.
AND THOUGH THOU ART MY FRIEND--
--AS WELL AS GUARDIAN OF THE RAINBOW BRIDGE--
--'TIS BUSINESS FOR ODIN'S EARS--ALONE.
STRANGE. THE PALACE GUARDS PASSED ME WITHOUT RESISTANCE... MOST UNLIKELY BEHAVIOR FOR THOSE GRIM MEN.
AND MORE STRANGE STILL--YONDER STANDS ODIN, YET HE DOES NOT TURN TO GREET ME--
BUT REMAINS ODDLY SILENT, AS THOUGH--
MILORD ODIN--IS ANYTHING WRONG?
ONLY THAT I AM NOT ODIN--
--AND THAT ODIN--IS NOT HERE.
HILDEGARDE! WHAT SAYEST THOU, MY FRIEND--?
ODIN--
--IS GONE, MILADY, VANISHED.
WE ARE... ALONE.
AND WHILE A STUNNED SIF PONDERS THOSE IMPONDERABLE WORDS, WE SHALL TURN OUR ATTENTION TO HERCULES, WALKING UPTOWN AFTER AN ADVENTURE WITH SPIDER-MAN THIS PAST MORNING*..
*MARVEL TEAM-UP #28. --ROY.
...AS HE STRIDES FROM ONE ADVENTURE...
...INTO ANOTHER!
ARRRRRRR
RUN! HE'S COMING THIS WAY!
"HE"?

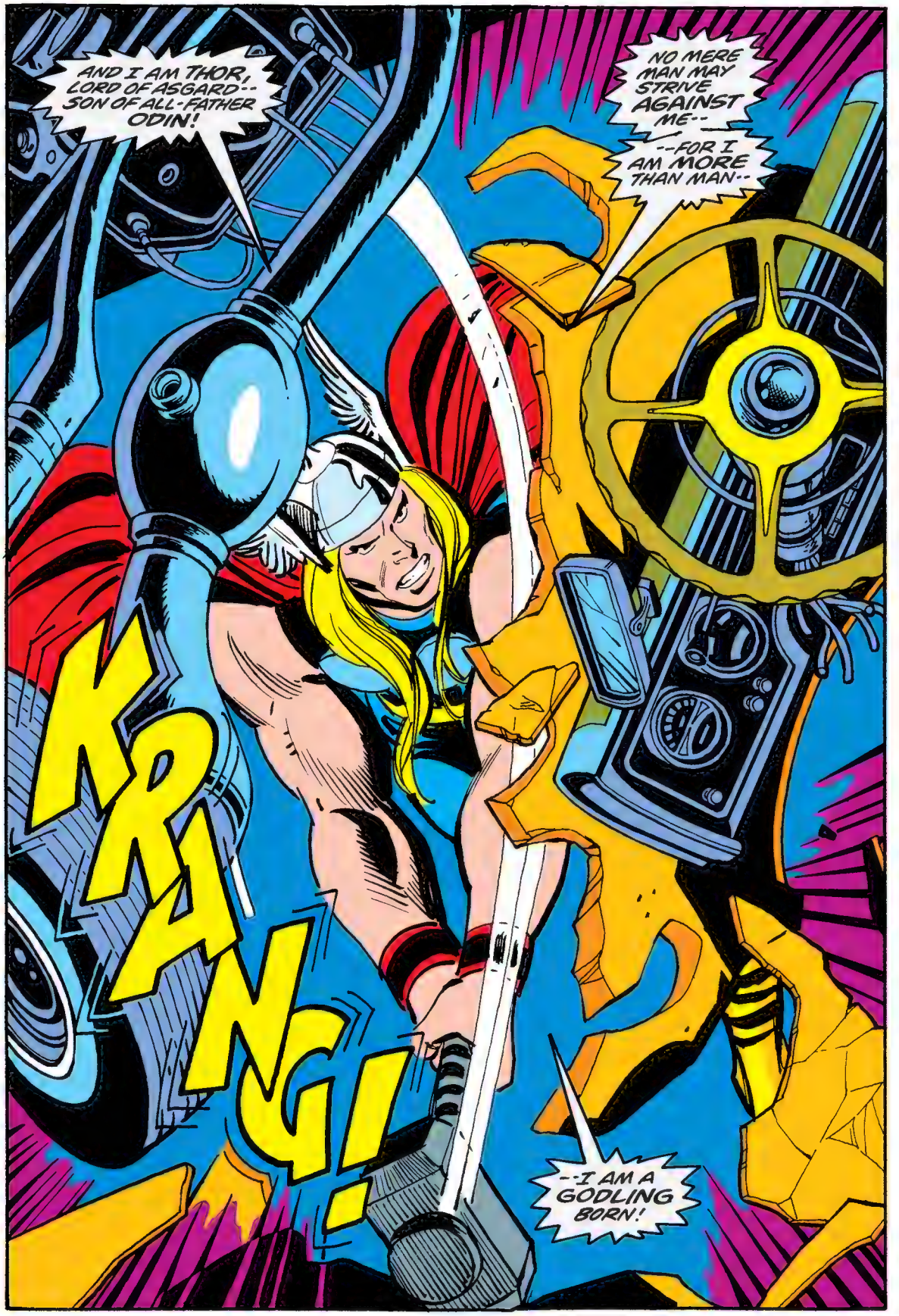
WHERE ARE THE MEN? SHOW ME THE MEN!
ARE MY DESCENDANTS SO WEAK, THEY RUN WITHOUT FIGHTING?
RIPP
ARMAK LAUGHS AT YOU, MEN!
YOU ARE WEAK--ALL OF YOU!
IT SEEMS THE DAY IS NOT DONE AFTER ALL.
GOOD.
I DO NOT KNOW THIS HAIRY MADMAN--
--BUT IF HE SEEKS A FIGHT--
--AND DOTH THREATEN A WOMAN TO GET IT--
--THEN BY MY FATHER'S BEARD--
--HE'LL HAVE HIS FIGHT-- WITH ME!
A GOOD BLOW-- A STRONG ONE-- BUT ARMAK IS THE FIRST MAN--
--AND THAT MAKES HIM THE STRONGEST MAN OF ALL!
WHAM!
KA-
-PLOW!

"--INTERRUPT THIS PROGRAM FOR A SPECIAL NEWS BULLETIN:
"A FEW MINUTES AGO, FIGHTING BROKE OUT IN THE TIMES SQUARE AREA--
"--AS THE SO-CALLED OLYMPIAN GOD, HERCULES, CONFRONTED A RAMPAGING GIANT IDENTIFYING HIMSELF AS ARMAK..
"--AND WAS DEFEATED ALMOST AT ONCE.
"OUR WOMAN ON THE SCENE REPORTS THAT--!
THOR--LISTEN TO ME, 'TIS THY FRIEND HERCULES--HIS LIFE IS IN DANGER!
PRAY, KRISTA--
--NOT NOW, NOT NOW.
SLAP!
HEIMDAL'S EYES! LISTEN!
THY FRIEND STANDS AGAINST A MONSTER--FIGHTING FOR HIS VERY LIFE!
DOST THOU DARE STAND IDLE? I SAY THEE, NAY!
ACT AS THOU MUST--
--ACT AS THOR, GOD OF THUNDER!
VERY WELL, WOMAN. IF SUCH BE THOR'S DUTY--
--SO BE IT!
BUT SOMEONE WILL PAY FOR TAKING ME FROM JANE FOSTER'S SIDE!
I SWEAR IT!

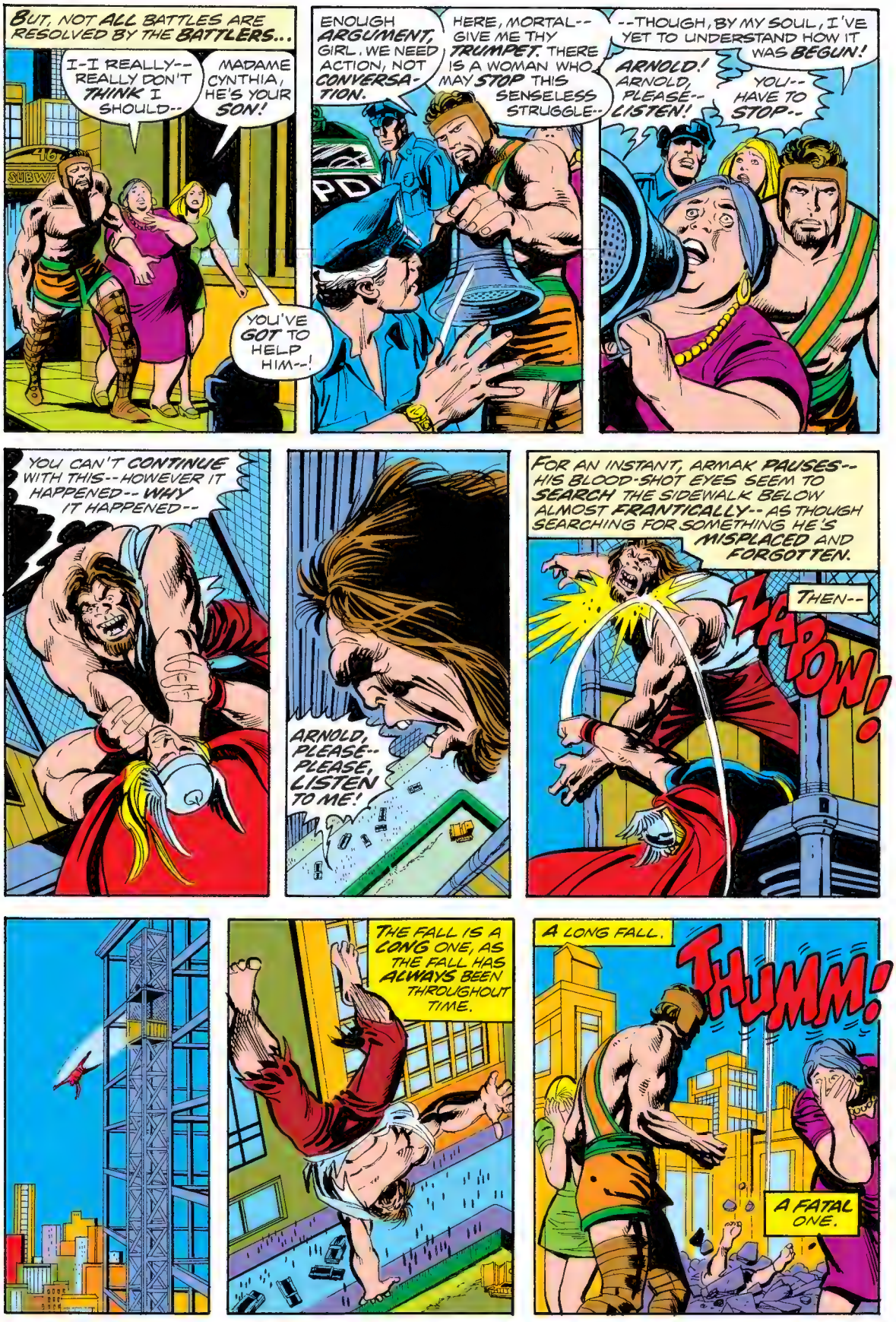

JUST WHO THAT "SOMEONE" SHOULD BE IS PRETTY CLEAR, THUNDER GOD!
ARRRRRR
HIS NAME IS ARMAK-- AND AT THE MOMENT, THE NAME MEANS CHAOS--
KAPOW!
--RAMPAGING CHAOS IN TIMES SQUARE!
HO, HERCULES!
I SEE THOU ART RECOVERED!
RECOVERED?
HOW CAN ONE RECOVER --WHEN HE NEVER FELL?
SAY NO MORE, MY FRIEND. 'TIS CLEAR THOU ART WEARY--AND NO MAN MAY GIVE HIS BEST WHEN THE BEST HE HAS-- HAS ALREADY BEEN GIVEN!
STAY-- GAIN THY BREATH--
--FOR THOR DOTH HAVE ANGER ENOUGH FOR ALL!
RELEASE THE WOMAN, BEAST!
THEN SHALL WE TEST THY METTLE--
--AND NOT BEFORE!
PLOW!


STAGGERED, THE NEANDERTHALIC ARMAK DROPS THE GIRL HE'S CARRIED SO LONG -- AND EVEN AS ARMAK PLUNGES SNARLING INTO BATTLE--
--HERCULES STEPS LITHELY FORWARD, TO SCOOP UP THE NEAR-HYSTERICAL ANNE CARWELL--
--AND HEARS FROM HER LIPS, THE STORY WE ALREADY KNOW!


YET, IT'S A STORY THAT DOESN'T CONCERN THE GOD OF THUNDER, FOR IT DEALS WITH THINGS THAT HAVE HAPPENED IN THE PAST--
--AND AT THE MOMENT, HE'S ALL TOO INVOLVED-- IN THE PRESENT!
I AM ARMAK, HAIRLESS ONE! ARMAK, THE FIRST MAN--
--THE STRONGEST MAN EVER BORN!


AND I AM THOR, LORD OF ASGARD-- SON OF ALL-FATHER ODIN!
NO MERE MAN MAY STRIVE AGAINST ME--
--FOR I AM MORE THAN MAN--
KRANG!
--I AM A GODLING BORN!

SNARLING CRIES OF DEFIANCE, THEY CLASH!
AND SO BEGINS WHAT MAY BE THE STRANGEST BATTLE EVER FOUGHT--!
FOR, ON THE ONE HAND, WE HAVE ARMAK, THE SELF-STYLED FIRST MAN-- PERHAPS A SYMBOL OF MANKIND'S SHEER ANIMAL BRUTALITY--
SPRAKK!
AND, ON THE OTHER HAND, WE HAVE THOR-- WHOSE GODLIKE STATUS IS ABOVE SUCH MORTAL ATTRIBUTES--
--YET WHO FIGHTS AS FIERCELY AS ARMAK--
CLICK!
--KNOWING ALMOST INSTINCTIVELY THAT FAR MORE IS AT STAKE HERE THAN MERE PHYSICAL VICTORY--!
HUMMMMM
UP AND UP THEY RISE, HIGHER AND HIGHER OVER THE WORLD OF MEN.
ACCIDENT-- OR FATE-- HAS BROUGHT THEM TO THIS PINNACLE--
--FROM WHICH THEY BOTH KNOW, ONLY ONE MAY DESCEND-- ALIVE!


BUT, NOT ALL BATTLES ARE RESOLVED BY THE BATTLERS...
I-I REALLY-- REALLY DON'T THINK I SHOULD--
MADAME CYNTHIA, HE'S YOUR SON!
YOU'VE GOT TO HELP HIM--!
ENOUGH ARGUMENT, GIRL. WE NEED ACTION, NOT CONVERSATION.
HERE, MORTAL-- GIVE ME THY TRUMPET. THERE IS A WOMAN WHO MAY STOP THIS SENSELESS STRUGGLE--
--THOUGH, BY MY SOUL, I'VE YET TO UNDERSTAND HOW IT WAS BEGUN!
ARNOLD! ARNOLD, PLEASE-- LISTEN!
YOU-- HAVE TO STOP--
YOU CAN'T CONTINUE WITH THIS-- HOWEVER IT HAPPENED-- WHY IT HAPPENED--
ARNOLD, PLEASE-- PLEASE, LISTEN TO ME!
FOR AN INSTANT, ARMAK PAUSES-- HIS BLOOD-SHOT EYES SEEM TO SEARCH THE SIDEWALK BELOW ALMOST FRANTICALLY-- AS THOUGH SEARCHING FOR SOMETHING HE'S MISPLACED AND FORGOTTEN.
THEN--
ZAP
POW!
THE FALL IS A LONG ONE, AS THE FALL HAS ALWAYS BEEN THROUGHOUT TIME.
A LONG FALL.
THUMM!
A FATAL ONE.

BUT--WHY DID HE FALL? BECAUSE HE WAS STRUCK?
OR MIGHT THERE BE ANOTHER REASON?
SOMETHING HE SAW IN THE STREET BELOW--SOMETHING THAT DISTRACTED HIM--?
...BEAUTIFUL...
...YOU...SO BEAUTIFUL...
HE-HE WAS REACHING TOWARD ME! BUT--I THOUGHT IT WAS HIS MOTHER WHO--WHO CALLED HIM--!
WHAT DOES IT MATTER? THE MAN IS DEAD.
THE MAN IS DEAD--BUT THE MYSTERY REMAINS: WHY DID HE BECOME THE BEAST, ARMAK--?
WHAT POWER TOUCHED HIM--CHANGED HIM?
I SWEAR, 'TIS A MYSTERY I WILL UNRAVEL, THOUGH IT TAKE ME TILL ETERNITY!
GIFTING HIS EYES SKYWARD, HERCULES LOOKS TO FIND THOR--
--AND, SEEING THE THUNDER GOD, HERCULES GASPS--!
PEAKS OF OLYMPUS! HE DOTH FLY OFF--!
'TIS MOST UNLIKE THE SON OF ODIN TO LEAVE WITHOUT WORD OR WARNING!
CAN THERE BE ANOTHER MYSTERY HERE?
NAY, NO MYSTERY: ONLY A LOVER'S CONCERN--AND THE BURNING UNANSWERED QUESTION ECHOING IN THE THUNDER GOD'S MIND!
IS JANE FOSTER STILL ALIVE?

THE ANSWER TO THAT, AND OTHER QUESTIONS, WILL ALL BE PROVIDED IN OUR NEXT ISSUE, TENTATIVELY TITLED:

LO, THE RAGING BATTLE!

BE THERE, THUNDERPHILE. IT'S SURE TO BE A CLASSIC!

THOR
MARVEL COMICS GROUP™
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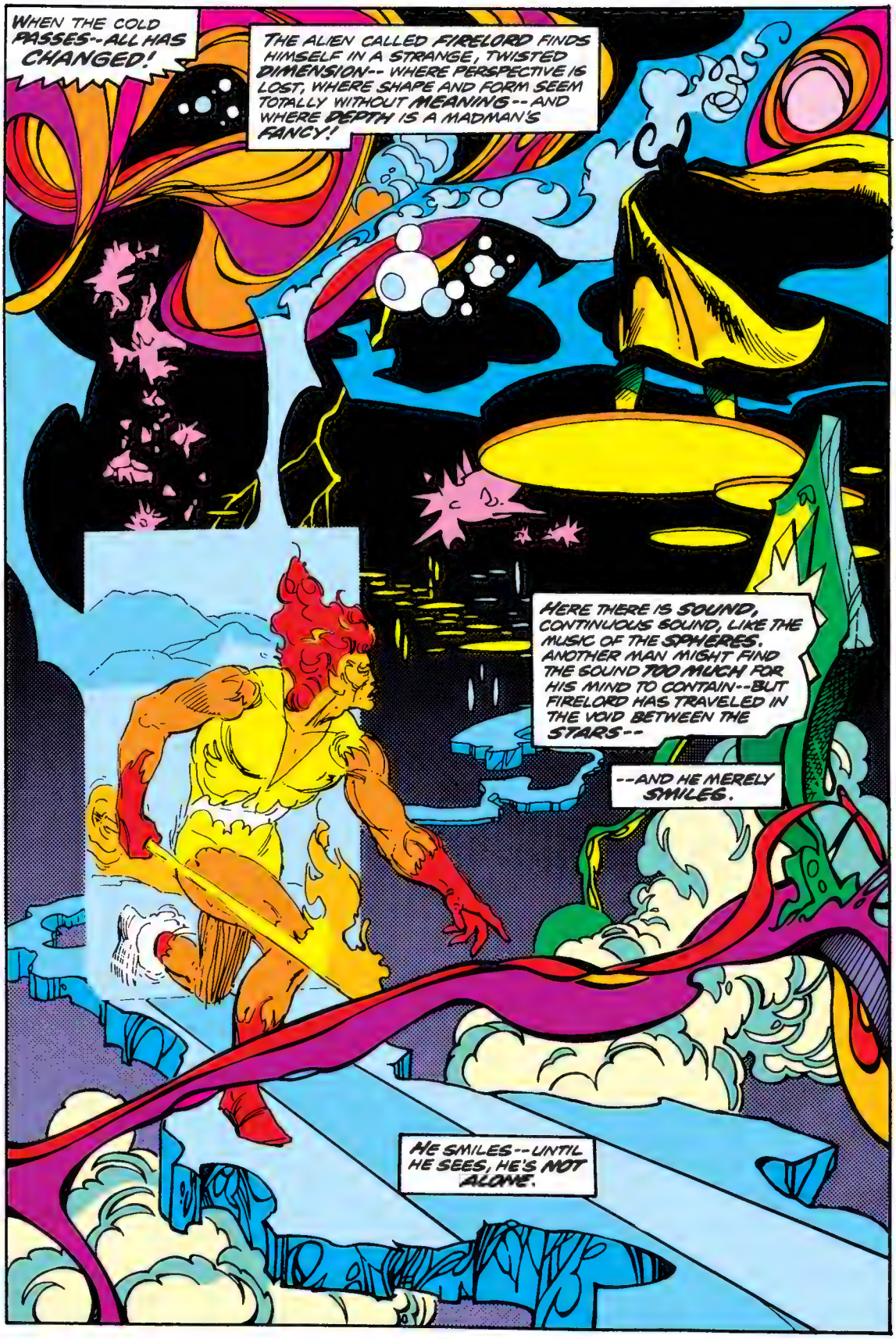
THE MIGHTY
THOR
BATTLES THE BEING CALLED
FIRELORD!

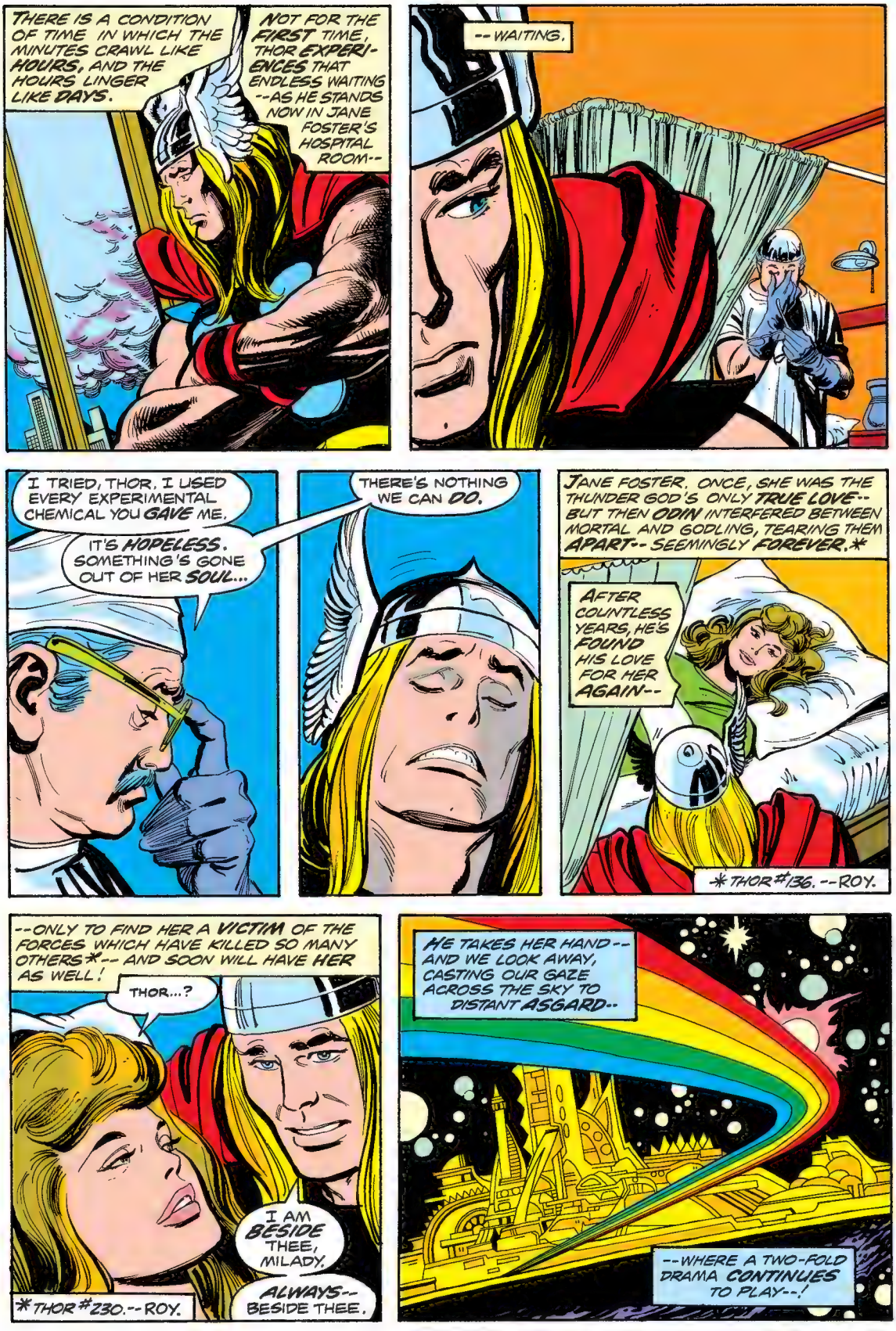
Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE MIGHTY THOR!
LO, THE RAGING BATTLE!
HIGH IN THE WHITE-TIPPED MOUNTAINS OF THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST, A FLAMING FIGURE CUTS A SCARLET PATH THROUGH THE DUSKY TWILIT SKY.
NO, IT'S NOT THE HUMAN TORCH-- IT'S AN ALIEN BEING CALLED FIRELORD--
AND HE'S ABOUT TO MAKE A MOST FATEFUL DISCOVERY!
GERRY CONWAY, AUTHOR
JOHN BUSCEMA & DICK GIORDANO, ARTISTS
J. COSTANZA, letterer
P. GOLDBERG, colorist
ROY THOMAS, EDITOR
IF YOU WANT TO SHARE IN THAT DISCOVERY--WELL THEN, FAITHFUL ONE--JUST TURN THE PAGE!

ODD. THERE SEEMS TO BE A CUBE OF SOME SORT ON THAT CLIFF BELOW--
--MILES FROM CIVILIZATION--
--HUNDREDS OF FEET FROM THE VALLEY FLOOR!
IT CERTAINLY IS NOT A NATURAL OBJECT.
YET--WHETHER IT IS MAN-MADE IS SOMETHING YET TO BE DETERMINED.
DURING MY WANDERINGS ACROSS THIS PLANET, I'VE SEEN MANY BIZARRE THINGS--BUT NOTHING SO BIZARRE AS THIS.
IT RIVALS THE MYSTERIES OF GALACTUS, HE WHO WAS ONCE MY MASTER.*
* "UNTIL THOR AND HERCULES FREED FIRELORD, IN ISSUE #228. --ROY.
IN FACT, PERHAPS IT WAS HIS DOING--A DEVICE TO MONITOR THE ACTIVITIES OF THE HUMANS, PERHAPS--
PERHAPS SOMETHING--MORE SINISTER.
IT BEARS INVESTIGATION. I WILL--
BY THE STARS OF SPACE!
MY HAND SINKS THROUGH ITS SURFACE--AS THOUGH THROUGH OIL!
SOME INSTINCT TELLS ME THE CUBE WAS MADE TO BE ENTERED.
THEN ENTER IT, I SHALL--FOR I AM FIRELORD--
--AND FIRELORD KNOWS NO FEAR!
THERE IS A MOMENT OF INCREDIBLE COLD--

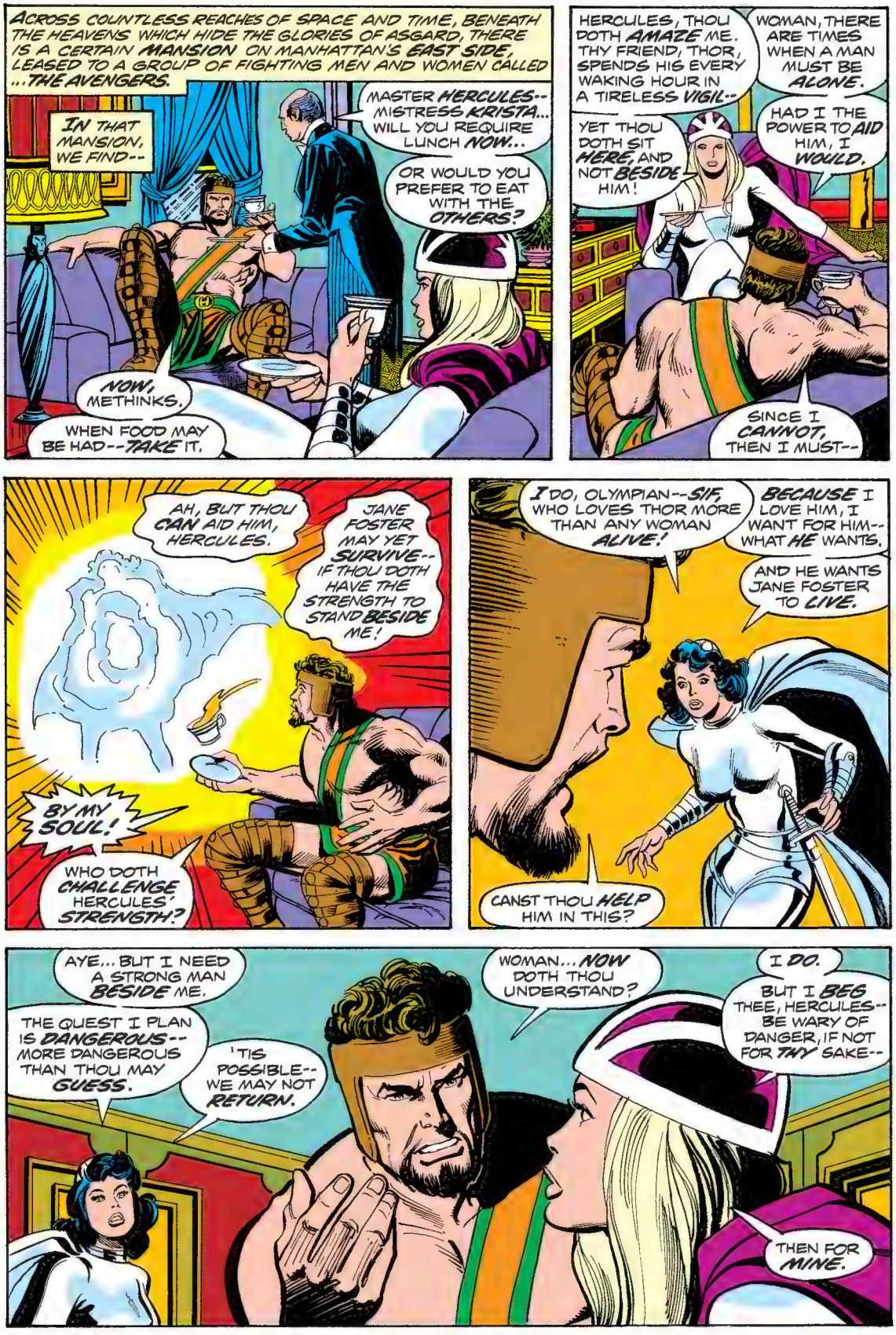

WHEN THE COLD PASSES--ALL HAS CHANGED!
THE ALIEN CALLED FIRELORD FINDS HIMSELF IN A STRANGE, TWISTED DIMENSION-- WHERE PERSPECTIVE IS LOST, WHERE SHAPE AND FORM SEEM TOTALLY WITHOUT MEANING-- AND WHERE DEPTH IS A MADMAN'S FANCY!
HERE THERE IS SOUND, CONTINUOUS SOUND, LIKE THE MUSIC OF THE SPHERES. ANOTHER MAN MIGHT FIND THE SOUND TOO MUCH FOR HIS MIND TO CONTAIN--BUT FIRELORD HAS TRAVELED IN THE VOID BETWEEN THE STARS--
--AND HE MERELY SMILES.
HE SMILES--UNTIL HE SEES, HE'S NOT ALONE.

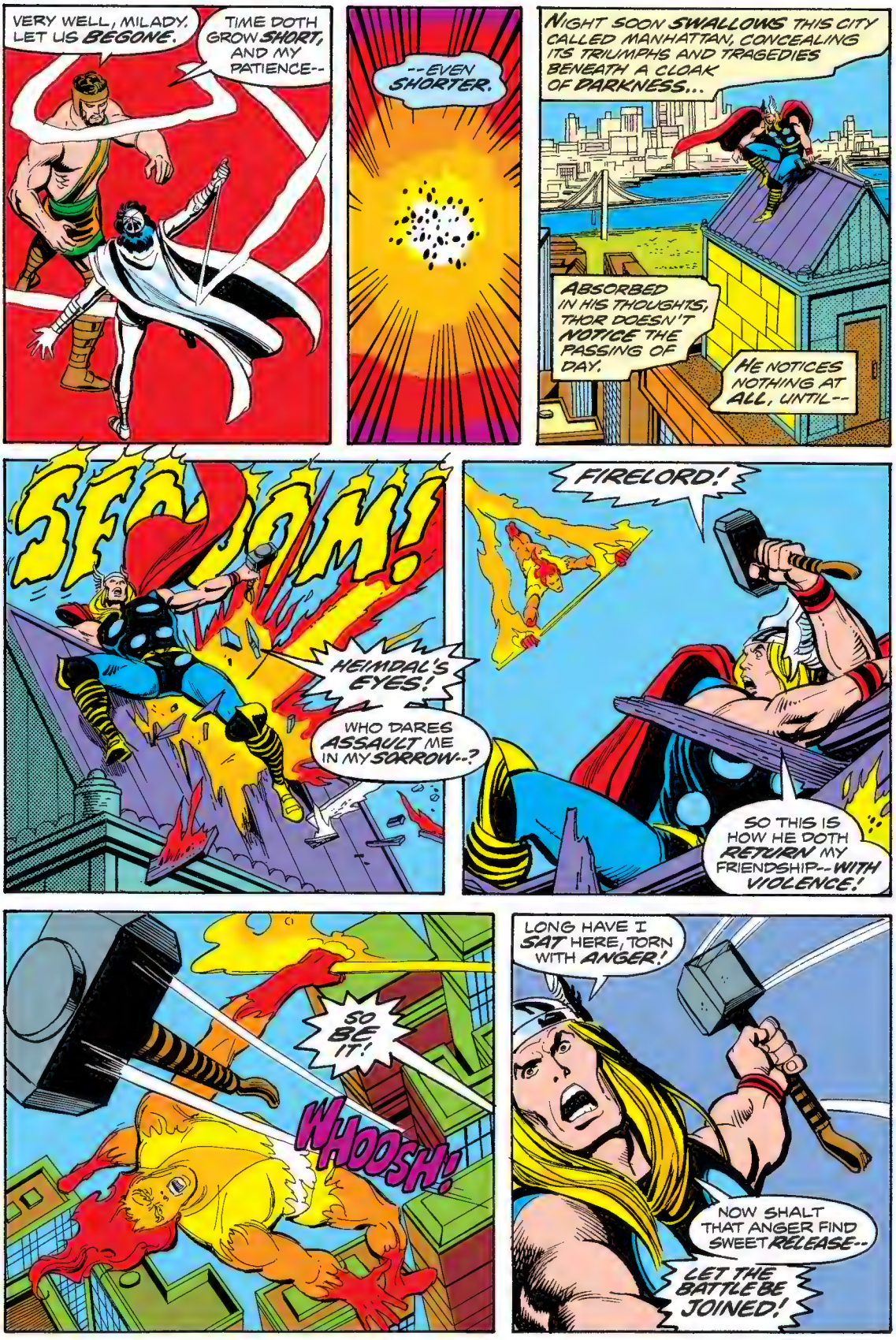
WELCOME.
AS THE FIRST OF MANY WHO WILL FOLLOW THEE--THOU ART HONORED.
WELCOME TO MY DOMAIN--AND TO MY STRUGGLE.
CAREFUL. I HAVE NO PATIENCE FOR OTHER MEN'S PRESUMPTIONS.
TELL ME WHO YOU ARE. THEN--WE'LL TALK.
I AM POWER, FOOL!
LITERALLY, POWER!
AND THOU--THOU ART A PAWN OF THAT POWER, WHETHER THOU KNOWEST IT--OR ACCEPTS IT!
I BROUGHT THEE HERE FOR A PURPOSE, ALIEN--!
THOU WILT FULFILL THAT PURPOSE--
--OR THOU WILT DIE!
WE'LL HAVE TO LEARN THE FIRELORD'S ANSWER LATER.
NOW, WE MUST LOOK TO OTHER THINGS--OTHER SITUATIONS--OTHER CHARACTERS.
SUCH AS THIS CHARACTER:
THOR, THE GOD OF THUNDER!
HIS PARTICULAR SITUATION: A DYING LOVED ONE--
--A WOMAN NAMED JANE FOSTER, WHOSE LIFE HE SPEEDS TO SAVE--

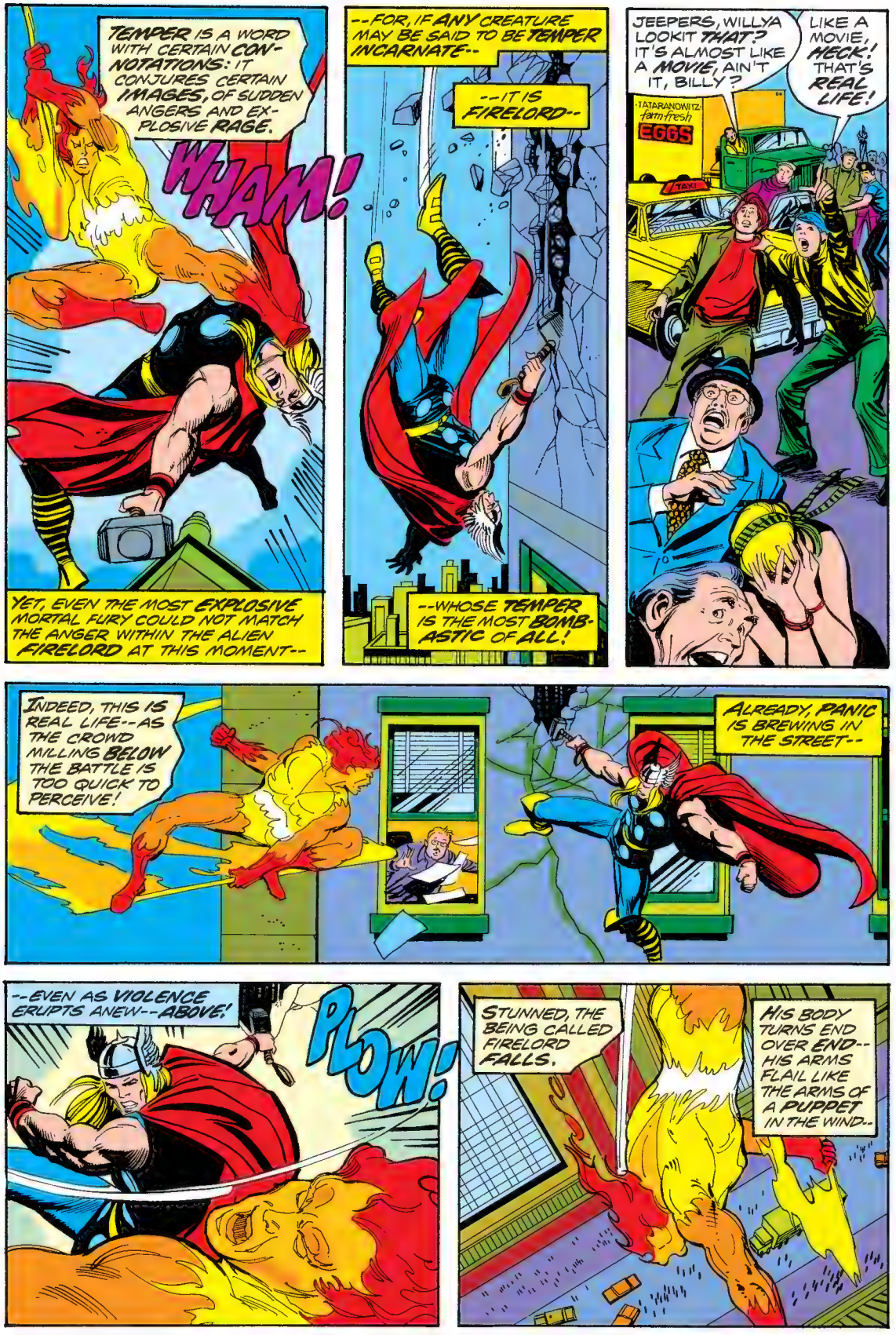
--IF HE CAN!
MORTAL, ATTEND ME.
I HAVE TRAVELED FAR ACROSS THIS CONTINENT, IN SEARCH OF CERTAIN RARE MEDICINES.
THESE MEDICINES HAVE I FOUND--
'TIS FOR THEE TO USE THEM!
MEDICINES?
LOOK HERE, WHO DO YOU THINK--
MORTAL, I HAVE NO DESIRE FOR ARGUMENT.
JANE FOSTER IS DYING. IF THOU ART TRULY A MAN OF HEALING--
I BEG THEE, HEAL.
THE DOCTOR STARES AT THE TOWERING ASSARDIAN LORD. HE FROWNS, LOOKS DOWN, THEN SLOWLY NODS...
I'LL SEE WHAT I CAN--
GOOD LORD! DO YOU REALIZE WHAT THESE ARE?
AYE...
BUT WE NEED NOT DISCUSS THAT HERE.
THE GOVERNMENT BASE FROM WHICH I TOOK THEM GAVE THEM FREELY, I ASSURE THEE--
AFTER YOU PERSUADED THEM, NO DOUBT.
PLEASE, DOCTOR. HURRY.
THERE IS LITTLE TIME FOR--
I UNDER-STAND, THOR.
MY WIFE DIED BECAUSE OF HEMOPHILIA--AND THEN WE DISCOVER-ED THE SO-CALLED "CLOTTING FACTOR".
I'LL DO MY BEST.


There is a condition of time in which the minutes crawl like hours, and the hours linger like days.
Not for the first time, Thor experiences that endless waiting --as he stands now in Jane Foster's hospital room--
--waiting.
I tried, Thor, I used every experimental chemical you gave me.
It's hopeless. Something's gone out of her soul...
There's nothing we can do.
Jane Foster. Once, she was the thunder god's only true love-- but then Odin interfered between mortal and godling, tearing them apart-- seemingly forever.*
After countless years, he's found his love for her again--
*Thor #136. --Roy.
--only to find her a victim of the forces which have killed so many others*-- and soon will have her as well!
Thor...?
I am beside thee, milady.
Always-- beside thee.
*Thor #230.--Roy.
He takes her hand-- and we look away, casting our gaze across the sky to distant Asgard--
--where a two-fold drama continues to play--!

MILADY SIF, 'TIS TRUE-- ODIN HAS VANISHED FROM ASGARD.
THE ALL-FATHER IS GONE--AND NONE KNOW WHERE TO FIND HIM!
BUT WHAT OF THOR? WHAT OF ODIN'S SON?
IT DOTH TEAR MY SOUL ASUNDER TO SEE HIM IN SUCH AGONY--
--FOR I LOVE THE GOD OF THUNDER, EVEN AS HE DOTH LOVE JANE FOSTER--
--AND I AM LOATHE TO SEE HIM SUFFER-- EVEN ONE MOMENT MORE!
NAY, MILADY. HAST THOU FORGOTTEN--
YET, IF ODIN CANNOT BE FOUND-- JANE FOSTER WILL DIE!
--THE RUNESTAFF OF KAMO THARNN?
HILDEGARDE, THOU ART EVER MY FRIEND.
THE RUNE-- STAFF HOLDS THE POWER OF LIFE AND DEATH--
--A POWER GRANTED ANY WHO MAY TAKE IT.
AND, WHILST I ALONE MAY FAIL--
--THERE IS ONE WHO MAY AID ME, WHO WILL NOT FAIL--
--AND SO I GO TO HIM--
--AND MAY THY GOOD WILL SPEED ME ON MY WAY!


ACROSS COUNTLESS REACHES OF SPACE AND TIME, BENEATH THE HEAVENS WHICH HIDE THE GLORIES OF ASGARD, THERE IS A CERTAIN MANSION ON MANHATTAN'S EAST SIDE, LEASED TO A GROUP OF FIGHTING MEN AND WOMEN CALLED ...THE AVENGERS.
IN THAT MANSION, WE FIND--
MASTER HERCULES--MISTRESS KRISTA... WILL YOU REQUIRE LUNCH NOW...
OR WOULD YOU PREFER TO EAT WITH THE OTHERS?
NOW, METHINKS, WHEN FOOD MAY BE HAD--TAKE IT.
HERCULES, THOU DOTH AMAZE ME. THY FRIEND, THOR, SPENDS HIS EVERY WAKING HOUR IN A TIRELESS VIGIL--
YET THOU DOTH SIT HERE, AND NOT BESIDE HIM!
WOMAN, THERE ARE TIMES WHEN A MAN MUST BE ALONE.
HAD I THE POWER TO AID HIM, I WOULD.
SINCE I CANNOT, THEN I MUST--
AH, BUT THOU CAN AID HIM, HERCULES.
JANE FOSTER MAY YET SURVIVE--IF THOU DOTH HAVE THE STRENGTH TO STAND BESIDE ME!
BY MY SOUL!
WHO DOTH CHALLENGE HERCULES' STRENGTH?
I DO, OLYMPIAN--SIF, WHO LOVES THOR MORE THAN ANY WOMAN ALIVE!
BECAUSE I LOVE HIM, I WANT FOR HIM--WHAT HE WANTS.
AND HE WANTS JANE FOSTER TO LIVE.
CANST THOU HELP HIM IN THIS?
AYE... BUT I NEED A STRONG MAN BESIDE ME.
THE QUEST I PLAN IS DANGEROUS--MORE DANGEROUS THAN THOU MAY GUESS.
'TIS POSSIBLE--WE MAY NOT RETURN.
WOMAN... NOW DOTH THOU UNDERSTAND?
I DO.
BUT I BEG THEE, HERCULES--BE WARY OF DANGER, IF NOT FOR THY SAKE--
THEN FOR MINE.

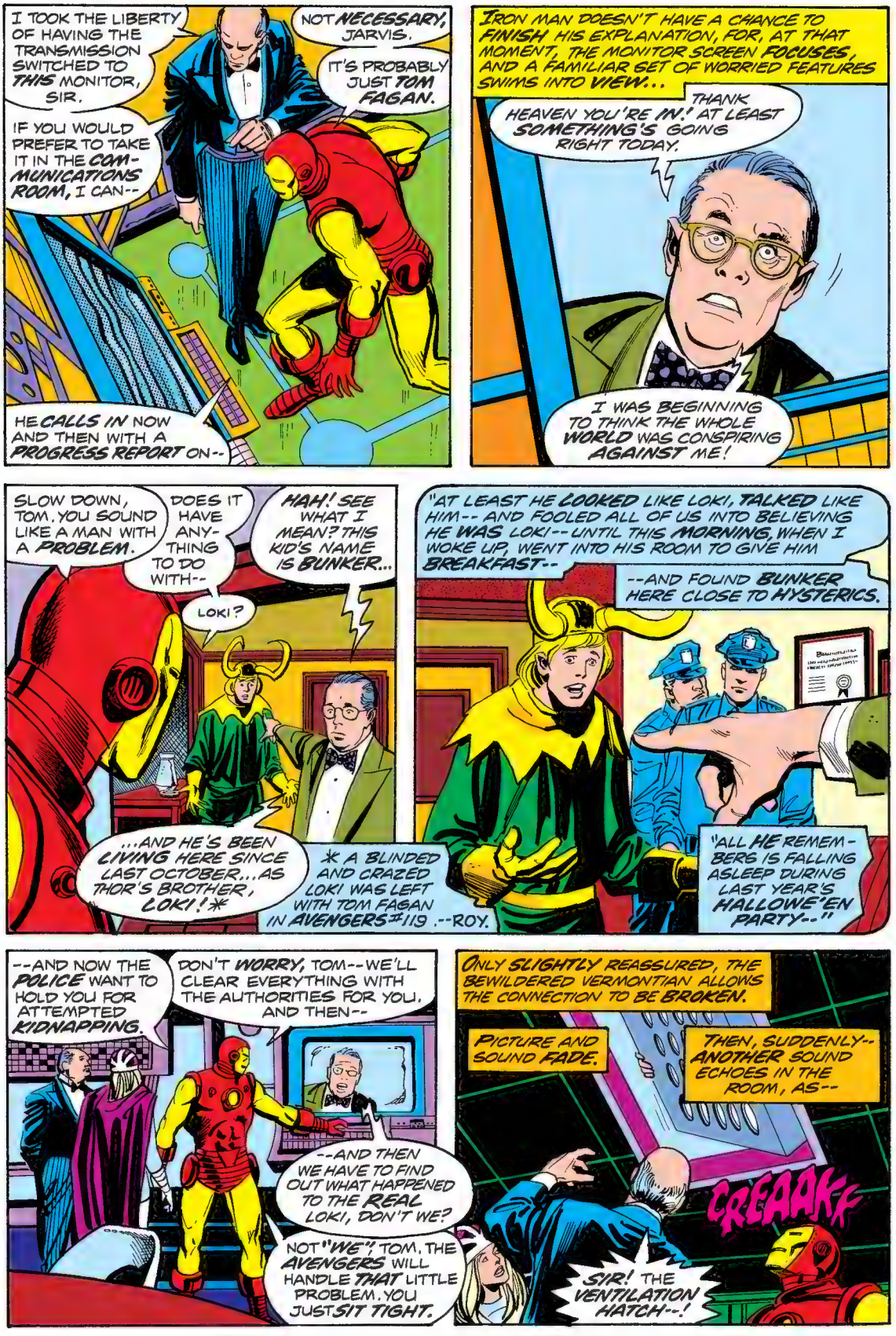

VERY WELL, MILADY. LET US BEGONE.
TIME DOTH GROW SHORT, AND MY PATIENCE--
--EVEN SHORTER.
NIGHT SOON SWALLOWS THIS CITY CALLED MANHATTAN, CONCEALING ITS TRIUMPHS AND TRAGEDIES BENEATH A CLOAK OF DARKNESS...
ABSORBED IN HIS THOUGHTS, THOR DOESN'T NOTICE THE PASSING OF DAY.
HE NOTICES NOTHING AT ALL, UNTIL--
SFOOM!
HEIMDAL'S EYES!
WHO DARES ASSAULT ME IN MY SORROW--?
FIRELORD!
SO THIS IS HOW HE DOTH RETURN MY FRIENDSHIP--WITH VIOLENCE!
SO BE IT!
WHOOSH!
LONG HAVE I SAT HERE, TORN WITH ANGER!
NOW SHALT THAT ANGER FIND SWEET RELEASE--
LET THE BATTLE BE JOINED!

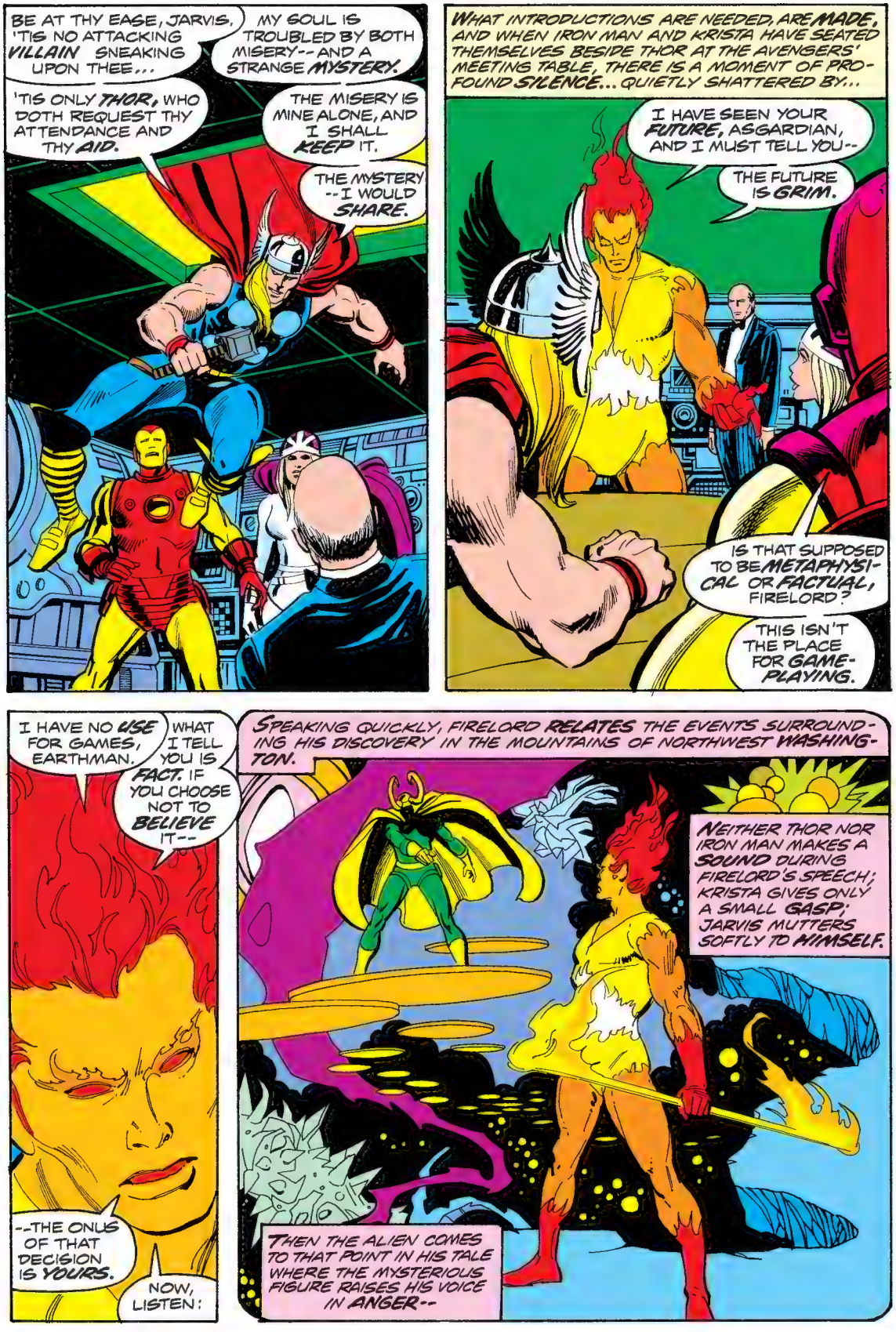

TEMPER IS A WORD WITH CERTAIN CONNOTATIONS: IT CONJURES CERTAIN IMAGES, OF SUDDEN ANGERS AND EXPLOSIVE RAGE.
WHAM!
YET, EVEN THE MOST EXPLOSIVE MORTAL FURY COULD NOT MATCH THE ANGER WITHIN THE ALIEN FIRELORD AT THIS MOMENT--
--FOR, IF ANY CREATURE MAY BE SAID TO BE TEMPER INCARNATE--
--IT IS FIRELORD--
--WHOSE TEMPER IS THE MOST BOMBASTIC OF ALL!
JEEPERS, WILLYA LOOKIT THAT? IT'S ALMOST LIKE A MOVIE, AIN'T IT, BILLY?
LIKE A MOVIE, HECK! THAT'S REAL LIFE!
TATARANOWITZ farm fresh EGGS
TAXI
INDEED, THIS IS REAL LIFE--AS THE CROWD MILLING BELOW THE BATTLE IS TOO QUICK TO PERCEIVE!
ALREADY, PANIC IS BREWING IN THE STREET--
--EVEN AS VIOLENCE ERUPTS ANEW--ABOVE!
PLOW!
STUNNED, THE BEING CALLED FIRELORD FALLS.
HIS BODY TURNS END OVER END--HIS ARMS FLAIL LIKE THE ARMS OF A PUPPET IN THE WIND--

--AND HE PLUNGES TOWARD THE CROWDED SIDEWALK, SO FAR BELOW--!
HE'S GONNA HIT, GEORGE--
HE'S GONNA HIT!
GET THESE PEOPLE BACK, FRED--
I'M TRYING! I'M TRYING!
BUT, INSTEAD OF A SHUDDERING IMPACT-- THERE IS INSTEAD A BLASTING FURY OF FLAME--
--AS A FIRE-HAIRED ALIEN HALTS HIMSELF WITH A COLUMN OF SHEER COSMIC ENERGY--!
I CAME TO YOU IN FRIENDSHIP, YET YOU GREETED ME-- WITH VIOLENCE!
YOU WILL SUFFER FOR THAT BETRAYAL, ASGARDIAN! I PROMISE, YOU WILL--
SPLOW!
'TWAS THEE WHO DID ATTACK, NOT I!
I SAY THEE NAY!
SAILING BACKWARD, FIRELORD TRIES TO STOP HIM-SELF--TO NO AVAIL!
KAROOM!
ALIEN FLESH MEETS EARTHLY STEEL-- AND THE STEEL GIVES WAY WITH A GRINDING EXPLOSION OF FLYING METAL--!
NOW, FIEND! NOW, LET US TEST THEE!
THOU WHO WOULDST STAND AGAINST ME--

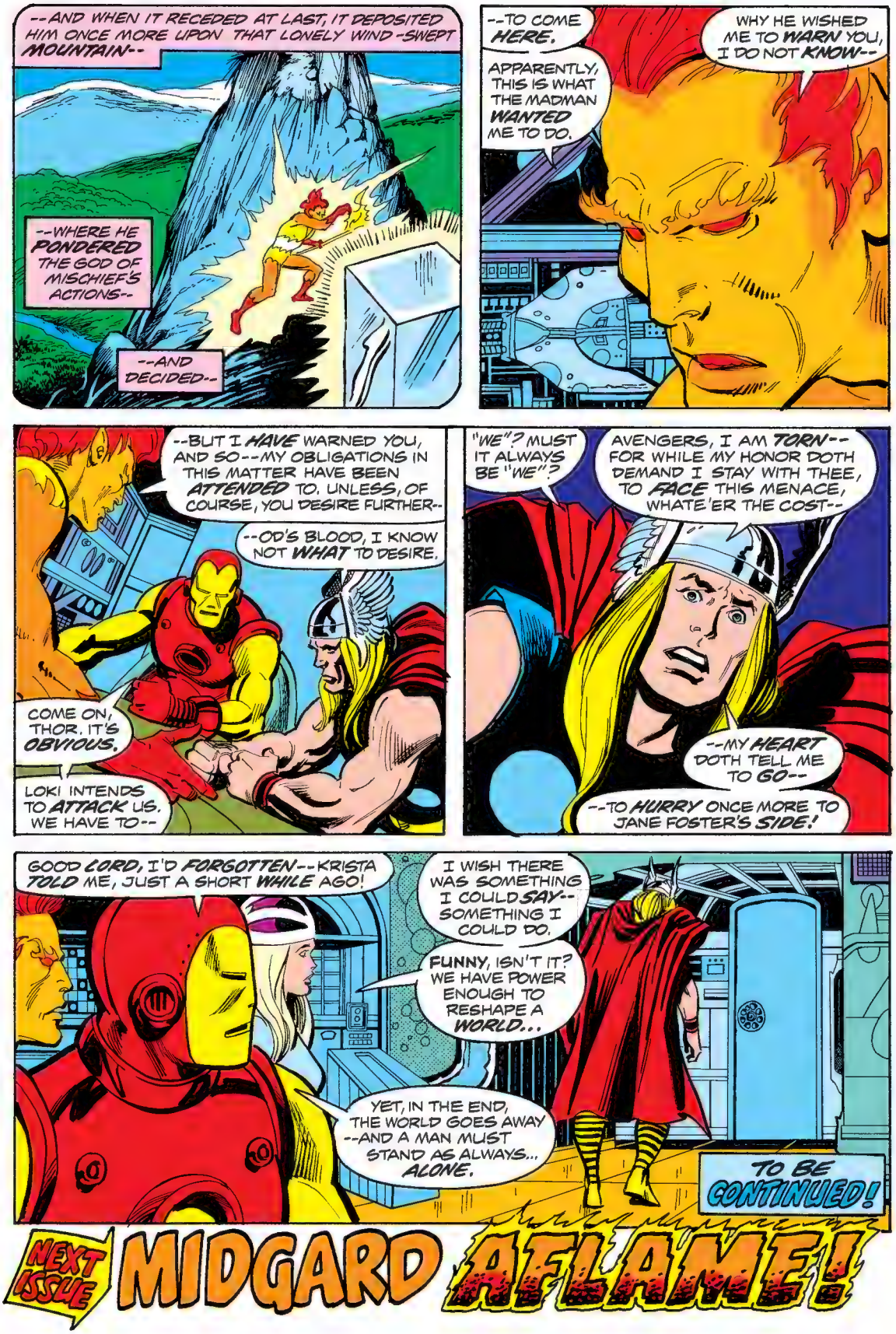
--STAND AGAINST ME NOW!
A SNARL OF RAGE--!
A MOTION TOO QUICK FOR THE HUMAN EYE TO GRASP--
--AND IT SEEMS AS THOUGH FIRELORD'S BLAZING STAFF CUTS THROUGH THE WALL OF A NEAR-BY ABANDONED BUILDING LIKE A HOT KNIFE THROUGH BUTTER--
KRUNCH!
--COLLAPSING THAT BUILDING INTO GIGANTIC SHARDS OF PLUMMETING MORTAR AND BRICK--
--WHICH RAPIDLY COVER THE STARTLED THOR--
--BURYING HIM COMPLETELY UNDER A GRIM, GRAY SHROUD OF INERT STONE.
NO!
THIS IS NOT AS I MEANT IT TO BE!
I DID NOT INTEND TO TRULY HARM HIM--!
IT WAS THE ANGER IN ME--THE FURY, WHICH--
WAIT.
"SOMETHING... MOVES."
RRRRRUMBLE!
INDEED, SOMETHING DOES MOVE--
KRASH!
AND IT'S THOR, GOD OF THUNDER!

WAIT, THUNDER GOD. IT PAINS ME TO SAY IT, BUT WE MUST HAVE PATIENCE.
ONLY PATIENCE CAN SAVE US NOW.
IS THIS A TRICK, ALIEN?
SOME NEW TREACHERY?
I SWEAR BY BIFROST'S MIGHTY SPAN, IF THOU DOTH SEEK TO DISTRACT ME FROM MY PURPOSE, I WILL--
PLEASE, THOR-- I AM NOT A PEACEFUL MAN. MY INSTINCT IS TO FIGHT WHEN WRONGED--
SO BELIEVE ME WHEN I SAY--
WHAT I MUST TELL YOU IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN ANY ARGUMENT!
THOR CONSIDERS, EYES NARROWING; HE PEERS AT THE ALIEN BEFORE HIM... AND THEN NODS.
I'LL LISTEN, FIRELORD.
BUT NOT HERE.
WE MUST GO TO THE AVENGERS' MANSION, WHERE OTHERS MAY ALSO LISTEN, AND JUDGE THE TRUTH OF WHAT THOU DOTH SAY...
AS YOU WILL. I--
HOLD IT, YOU TWO!
IN CASE YOU HADN'T NOTICED-- THIS IS A PUBLIC STREET, NOT A PLAYGROUND FOR SUPER-HEROES.
DETECTIVE SGT. BLUMKENN!
WE HAVE AN EXPLANATION--
ALL I GOTTA SAY IS--
IT BETTER BE GOOD.
MEANWHILE, AS THEY SAY--
--CERTAIN OTHER EVENTS OCCUR AT AN EASTSIDE MANSION WE'VE VISITED ONCE THIS ISSUE ALREADY--
--EVENTS WHICH HAVE QUITE A DEFINITE BEARING ON THE STORY UNFOLDING BEFORE US:
SIR, I BELIEVE THERE'S A MESSAGE COMING IN.
ACCORDING TO THE LOCATION FINDER-- IT IS APPARENTLY COMING-- FROM VERMONT.
TO BE PRECISE-- RUTLAND, VERMONT!


I TOOK THE LIBERTY OF HAVING THE TRANSMISSION SWITCHED TO THIS MONITOR, SIR.
IF YOU WOULD PREFER TO TAKE IT IN THE COMMUNICATIONS ROOM, I CAN--
HE CALLS IN NOW AND THEN WITH A PROGRESS REPORT ON--
NOT NECESSARY, JARVIS.
IT'S PROBABLY JUST TOM FAGAN.
IRON MAN DOESN'T HAVE A CHANCE TO FINISH HIS EXPLANATION, FOR, AT THAT MOMENT, THE MONITOR SCREEN FOCUSES, AND A FAMILIAR SET OF WORRIED FEATURES SWIMS INTO VIEW...
THANK HEAVEN YOU'RE IN! AT LEAST SOMETHING'S GOING RIGHT TODAY.
I WAS BEGINNING TO THINK THE WHOLE WORLD WAS CONSPIRING AGAINST ME!
SLOW DOWN, TOM. YOU SOUND LIKE A MAN WITH A PROBLEM.
DOES IT HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH--
LOKI?
HAH! SEE WHAT I MEAN? THIS KID'S NAME IS BUNKER...
...AND HE'S BEEN LIVING HERE SINCE LAST OCTOBER...AS THOR'S BROTHER, LOKI!*
* A BLINDED AND CRAZED LOKI WAS LEFT WITH TOM FAGAN IN AVENGERS #119 --ROY.
"AT LEAST HE LOOKED LIKE LOKI, TALKED LIKE HIM-- AND FOOLED ALL OF US INTO BELIEVING HE WAS LOKI-- UNTIL THIS MORNING, WHEN I WOKE UP, WENT INTO HIS ROOM TO GIVE HIM BREAKFAST--
--AND FOUND BUNKER HERE CLOSE TO HYSTERICS.
"ALL HE REMEMBERS IS FALLING ASLEEP DURING LAST YEAR'S HALLOWE'EN PARTY--"
--AND NOW THE POLICE WANT TO HOLD YOU FOR ATTEMPTED KIDNAPPING.
DON'T WORRY, TOM--WE'LL CLEAR EVERYTHING WITH THE AUTHORITIES FOR YOU, AND THEN--
--AND THEN WE HAVE TO FIND OUT WHAT HAPPENED TO THE REAL LOKI, DON'T WE?
NOT "WE", TOM. THE AVENGERS WILL HANDLE THAT LITTLE PROBLEM. YOU JUST SIT TIGHT.
ONLY SLIGHTLY REASSURED, THE BEWILDERED VERMONTIAN ALLOWS THE CONNECTION TO BE BROKEN.
PICTURE AND SOUND FADE.
THEN, SUDDENLY-- ANOTHER SOUND ECHOES IN THE ROOM, AS--
CREAAK-F
SIR! THE VENTILATION HATCH--!


BE AT THY EASE, JARVIS. 'TIS NO ATTACKING VILLAIN SNEAKING UPON THEE...
MY SOUL IS TROUBLED BY BOTH MISERY--AND A STRANGE MYSTERY.
'TIS ONLY THOR, WHO DOTH REQUEST THY ATTENDANCE AND THY AID.
THE MISERY IS MINE ALONE, AND I SHALL KEEP IT.
THE MYSTERY--I WOULD SHARE.
WHAT INTRODUCTIONS ARE NEEDED, ARE MADE, AND WHEN IRON MAN AND KRISTA HAVE SEATED THEMSELVES BESIDE THOR AT THE AVENGERS' MEETING TABLE, THERE IS A MOMENT OF PROFOUND SILENCE... QUIETLY SHATTERED BY...
I HAVE SEEN YOUR FUTURE, ASGARDIAN, AND I MUST TELL YOU--
THE FUTURE IS GRIM.
IS THAT SUPPOSED TO BE METAPHYSICAL OR FACTUAL, FIRELORD?
THIS ISN'T THE PLACE FOR GAME-PLAYING.
I HAVE NO USE FOR GAMES, EARTHMAN.
WHAT I TELL YOU IS FACT. IF YOU CHOOSE NOT TO BELIEVE IT--
--THE ONUS OF THAT DECISION IS YOURS.
NOW, LISTEN:
SPEAKING QUICKLY, FIRELORD RELATES THE EVENTS SURROUNDING HIS DISCOVERY IN THE MOUNTAINS OF NORTHWEST WASHINGTON.
NEITHER THOR NOR IRON MAN MAKES A SOUND DURING FIRELORD'S SPEECH; KRISTA GIVES ONLY A SMALL GASP; JARVIS MUTTERS SOFTLY TO HIMSELF.
THEN THE ALIEN COMES TO THAT POINT IN HIS TALE WHERE THE MYSTERIOUS FIGURE RAISES HIS VOICE IN ANGER--

--AND THE IDENTITY OF THE VILLAIN BECOMES ALL TOO OMINOUSLY CLEAR!
I AM POWER, FOOL! LITERALLY, POWER!
AND THEE--THOU ART A PAWN OF THAT POWER, WHETHER THOU KNOWEST IT--OR ACCEPTS IT! I BROUGHT THEE HERE FOR A PURPOSE, ALIEN--!
THOU WILT FULFILL THAT PURPOSE--OR THOU WILT DIE!
SO SWEARS LOKI, FUTURE LORD OF ASGARD!
HIS VOICE, WHEN HE SPEAKS, IS ALTERED SOMEHOW; IT IS LOW, GUTTERAL--THERE IS NO SUBLIME SOPHISTICATION HERE, NO GENTLE RHYTHM-- NO BROTHERLY "THEE" OR "THOU".
WHEN THE POWER OF DORMAMMU PASSED THROUGH ME, I ABSORBED THE SPIRIT OF HIS MYSTIC BEING...*
EVERYTHING THAT HE WAS, I AM.
ALL THAT MADE HIM GREAT RESIDES IN ME--IS MINE TO CONTROL--MINE TO COMMAND!
THESE MANY MONTHS, I HAVE WAITED--STUDYING THE FULL EXTENT OF MY ABILITIES--LEARNING ALL MY NEWLY-GAINED SECRETS--
THERE IS ONLY STARK INSANITY.
AND COMBINED WITH THAT INSANITY--
--IS AN AWARENESS OF PERSONAL, TRANSCENDENTAL FORCE!
*SHOWN IN THE CATACLYSMIC CONCLUSION OF AVENGERS #118. --ROY.
--UNTIL I WAS READY TO STRIKE!
AND NOW I SHALL STRIKE--THROUGH YOU!
A GREAT BURST OF ENERGY WASHED OVER THE FIRELORD THEN; CATCHING HIM UP LIKE A BIRD IN A STORM, IT WHIRLED HIM AWAY THROUGH TIME AND SPACE--


--AND WHEN IT RECEDED AT LAST, IT DEPOSITED HIM ONCE MORE UPON THAT LONELY WIND-SWEPT MOUNTAIN--
--WHERE HE PONDERED THE GOD OF MISCHIEF'S ACTIONS--
--AND DECIDED--
--TO COME HERE.
APPARENTLY, THIS IS WHAT THE MADMAN WANTED ME TO DO.
WHY HE WISHED ME TO WARN YOU, I DO NOT KNOW--
--BUT I HAVE WARNED YOU, AND SO--MY OBLIGATIONS IN THIS MATTER HAVE BEEN ATTENDED TO. UNLESS, OF COURSE, YOU DESIRE FURTHER--
--OD'S BLOOD, I KNOW NOT WHAT TO DESIRE.
COME ON, THOR. IT'S OBVIOUS.
LOKI INTENDS TO ATTACK US. WE HAVE TO--
"WE"? MUST IT ALWAYS BE "WE"?
AVENGERS, I AM TORN--FOR WHILE MY HONOR DOTH DEMAND I STAY WITH THEE, TO FACE THIS MENACE, WHATE'ER THE COST--
--MY HEART DOTH TELL ME TO GO--
--TO HURRY ONCE MORE TO JANE FOSTER'S SIDE!
GOOD LORD, I'D FORGOTTEN--KRISTA TOLD ME, JUST A SHORT WHILE AGO!
I WISH THERE WAS SOMETHING I COULD SAY--SOMETHING I COULD DO.
FUNNY, ISN'T IT? WE HAVE POWER ENOUGH TO RESHAPE A WORLD...
YET, IN THE END, THE WORLD GOES AWAY --AND A MAN MUST STAND AS ALWAYS... ALONE.
TO BE CONTINUED!
NEXT ISSUE
MIDGARD AFLAME!

THOR
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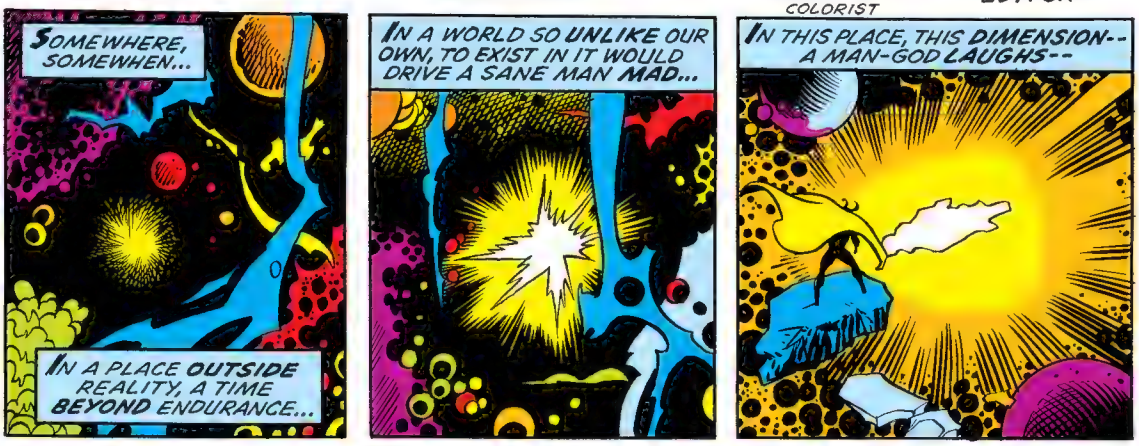
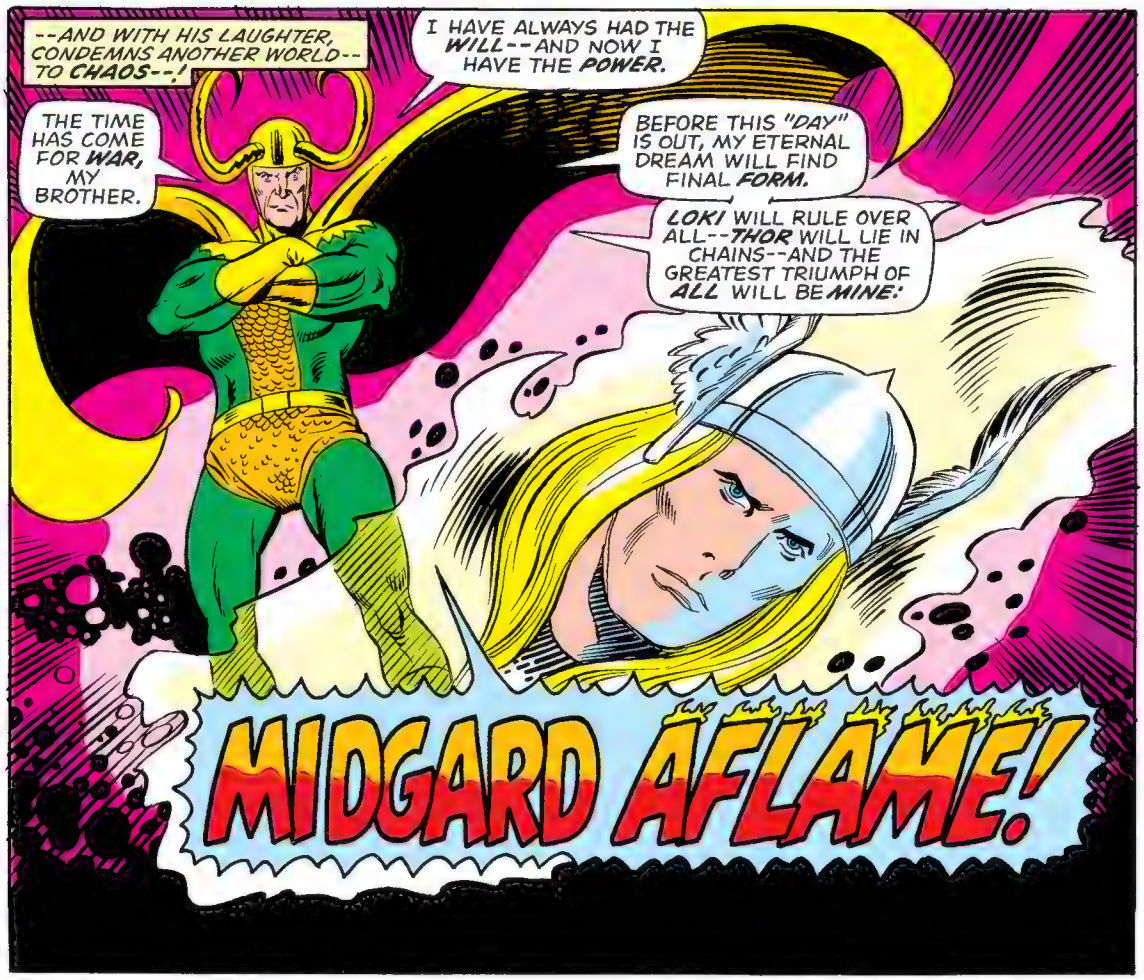
THE MIGHTY
THOR
THE BATTLE YOU'VE BEEN WAITING FOR! IT'S WORLD WAR BETWEEN
ASGARD AND EARTH!
AND THE THUNDER GOD IS CAUGHT IN THE MIDDLE!

Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE MIGHTY THOR!™

GERRY CONWAY *AUTHOR* * JOHN BUSCEMA+CHIC STONE *ARTISTS* * ARTIE SIMEK *LETTERER* PETRA G. *COLORIST* * LEN WEIN *EDITOR*


SOMEWHERE, SOMEWHEN...
IN A PLACE OUTSIDE REALITY, A TIME BEYOND ENDURANCE...
IN A WORLD SO UNLIKE OUR OWN, TO EXIST IN IT WOULD DRIVE A SANE MAN MAD...
IN THIS PLACE, THIS DIMENSION--A MAN-GOD LAUGHS--

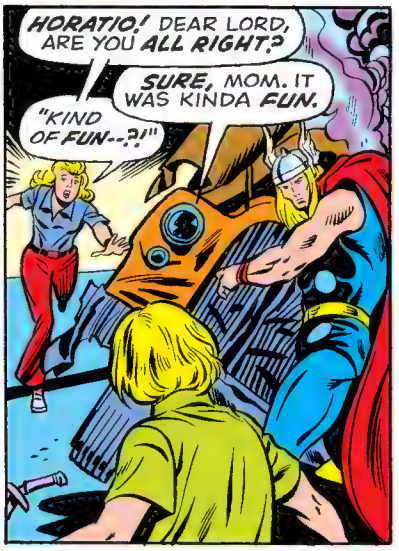

--AND WITH HIS LAUGHTER, CONDEMNS ANOTHER WORLD--TO CHAOS--!
I HAVE ALWAYS HAD THE WILL--AND NOW I HAVE THE POWER.
THE TIME HAS COME FOR WAR, MY BROTHER.
BEFORE THIS "DAY" IS OUT, MY ETERNAL DREAM WILL FIND FINAL FORM.
LOKI WILL RULE OVER ALL--THOR WILL LIE IN CHAINS--AND THE GREATEST TRIUMPH OF ALL WILL BE MINE!
MIDGARD AFLAME!

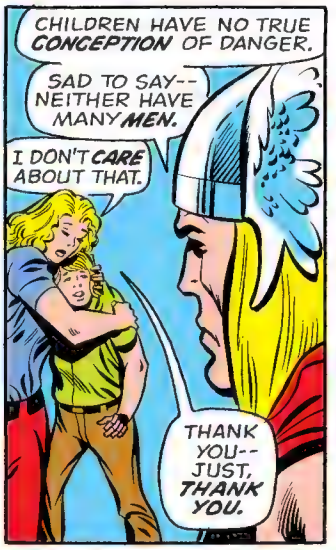
YOU CANNOT IMAGINE THE JOY WHICH IS MINE, O BROTHER.
THE EXQUISITE TASTE OF VICTORY IN ANTICIPATION--
--A PLEASURE WHICH SURPASSES EVEN THE MOST DECADENT FANTASIES OF THE MOST DEGENERATE HEDONIST.
AH, MY BROTHER--ALMOST, I WOULD LIKE TO POSTPONE THE ACT--
--SO THAT I COULD CONTINUE TO DELIGHT IN THE PLANNING.
BUT, AS EVER--
--LOKI IS A GOD OF ACTION.
NO LONGER WILL I MUSE ON THE TWISTING OF FATE WHICH GAVE ME THE POWER I HAVE ALWAYS NEEDED.
NO LONGER WILL I PRAISE THE MOMENT WHEN DORMAMMU PASSED THROUGH ME--
--ADDING A PORTION OF HIS IMMEASURABLE STRENGTH TO MY OWN.*
*IN AVENGERS #116. --LEN.
RATHER, I WILL SUMMON FORTH THE ENERGIES WHICH ARE MINE TO COMMAND--
--AND WITH THEM--
--JOURNEY HENCE TO ASGARD!
TO PROVIDE AN OLD SAYING WITH A NEW MEANING:
"THE THOUGHT IS FATHER TO THE DEED."

BEFORE AN INSTANT OF TIME HAS PASSED, LOKI'S INSUBSTANTIAL FORM HAS COMPLETED ITS VOYAGE FROM THAT FAR DIMENSION TO OUR MORE MUNDANE COSMOS...
...IF MUNDANE HAS ANY MEANING WHEN APPLIED TO THAT MOST WONDEROUS OF CITIES...
ASGARD!
IN ODIN'S NAME--
WHO DOTH DARE DISTURB THE STUDIES OF THE ALL-FATHER'S VIZIER?
I DARE, FOOL.
LOKI DARES.
WHAT'S THIS--? YOU APPEAR FRIGHTENED, DISTRAUGHT. CAN IT BE-- YOU HAVE REASON TO FEAR ME?
I, ODIN'S STEP-SON-- A PRINCE OF ASGARD?
THE TONE DOTH BELIE THY WORDS, PERFIDIOUS PRINCE.
IF THOU DOTH SEEK TO ATTACK ASGARD, NOW, WHEN ODIN IS GONE FROM THE ETERNAL CITY--
ARE YOU THREATENING ME, LITTLE MAN?
YOU WILL BE THE FIRST TO FEEL LOKI'S WRATH, VIZIER.
THE FIRST-- BUT NOT THE LAST!
FOOM!
WITH ODIN AWAY FROM ASGARD, WITH THOR ON EARTH--THERE IS NO ONE WITH POWER ENOUGH TO STOP ME!
EVERY MAN, WOMAN AND CHILD IN ASGARD WILL BE MINE TO CONTROL--!
AND WHEN THEY ARE MY MINDLESS SLAVES--
--LOKI WILL BE LORD OF ASGARD!

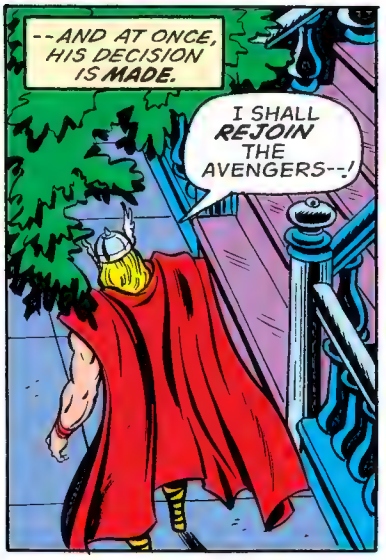
ON A QUIET TREE-LINED STREET ON MANHATTAN'S EAST SIDE NOT MANY HOURS LATER, A BEMUSED GOD OF THUNDER LEAVES THE SOMBER SILENCE OF THE AVENGERS MANSION.
HE PAYS NO HEED TO THOSE AROUND HIM--!
NO, HIS MIND DWELLS ON MATTERS MORE GRAVE THAN THE STARTLED GLANCES OF A FEW GAPING MORTALS.
HE IS THOR, HALF-BROTHER TO LOKI.
HIS LIFE HAS NEVER BEEN SIMPLE--
--YET NOW, IT HAS TAKEN ON A NEW COMPLEXITY.
THE WOMAN HE LOVES LIES DYING--
--AND LOKI THREATENS EARTH.
WHICH IS THE MORE DESERVING OF HIS CONCERN?
HE HAS NO ANSWER, AND HIS SOUL IS RENT WITH TORMENT.
SO MUCH SO, THAT HE ALMOST DOESN'T SEE--
THAT CHILD!
HE SEES YON SPEEDING TRUCK--YET HE CANNOT MOVE--
BUT THOR CAN MOVE--

SCROM!
--AND WILL!


HORATIO! DEAR LORD, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
SURE, MOM. IT WAS KINDA FUN.
"KIND OF FUN--?!"


CHILDREN HAVE NO TRUE CONCEPTION OF DANGER.
SAD TO SAY-- NEITHER HAVE MANY MEN.
I DON'T CARE ABOUT THAT.
THANK YOU-- JUST, THANK YOU.

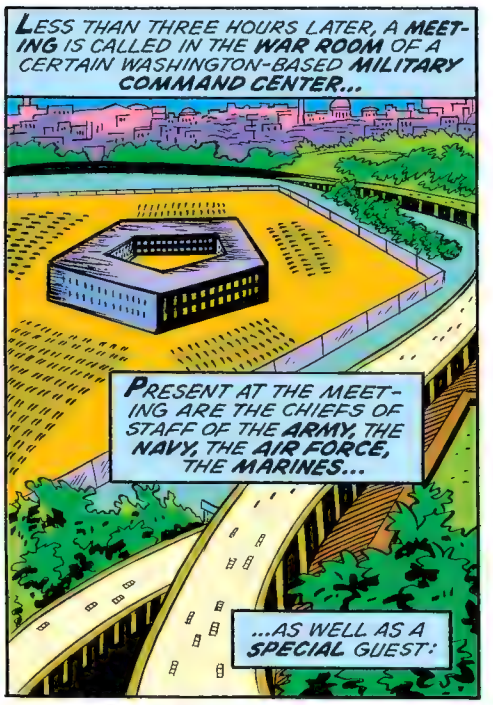
THOR CONSIDERS THE GRATEFUL MOTHER BEFORE HIM; AND IN A STRANGE WAY, HIS THOUGHTS EXPAND:
HE SEES THE HUMAN RACE IN ITS ENTIRETY--

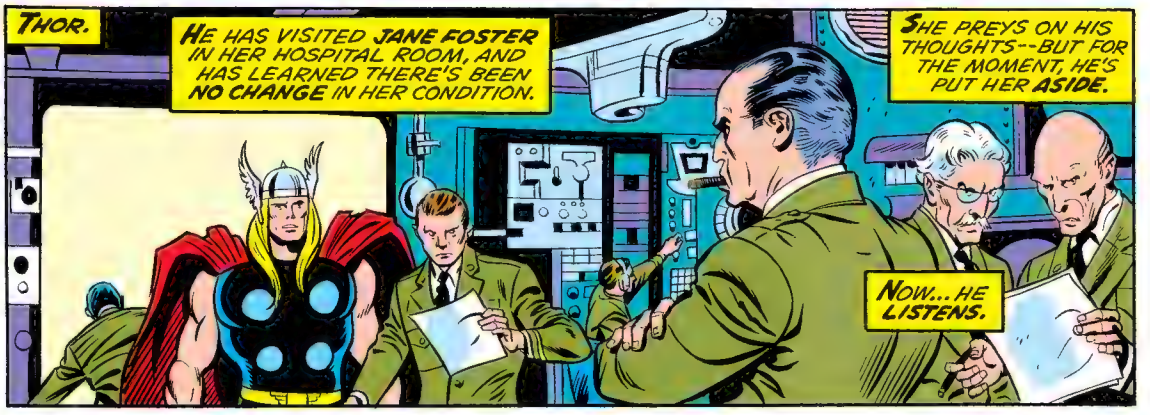

--AND AT ONCE, HIS DECISION IS MADE.
I SHALL REJOIN THE AVENGERS--!

TOGETHER, WE WILL MAKE PLANS FOR DEALING WITH LOKI.

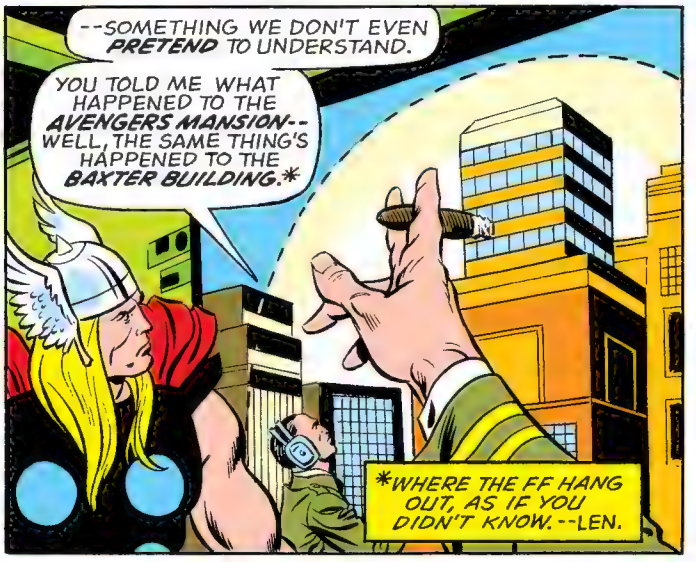
ONLY BY DOING THIS, MAY I--EH?
SPONG!

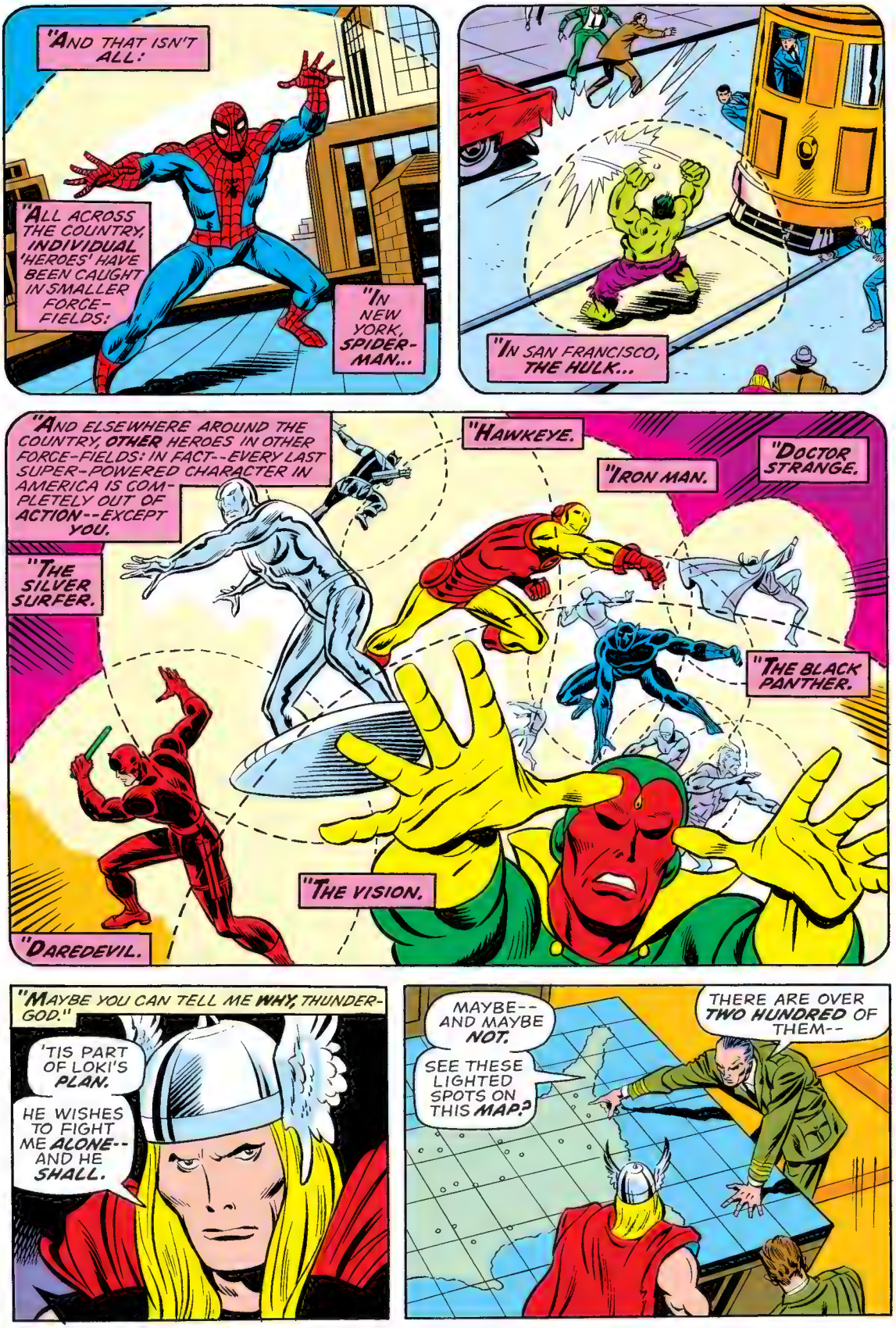
ODIN'S BLOOD! SOME FORM OF MYSTIC FORCE FIELD DOTH ENCLOSE YON MANSION--
--FORBIDDING MY ENTRANCE, SEALING THE AVENGERS FROM THE WORLD!
IT TAKES NO SECOND SIGHT TO KNOW 'TIS LOKI'S DOING.
ALREADY--THE GAME IS AFOOT.


LESS THAN THREE HOURS LATER, A MEETING IS CALLED IN THE WAR ROOM OF A CERTAIN WASHINGTON-BASED MILITARY COMMAND CENTER...
PRESENT AT THE MEETING ARE THE CHIEFS OF STAFF OF THE ARMY, THE NAVY, THE AIR FORCE, THE MARINES...
...AS WELL AS A SPECIAL GUEST:

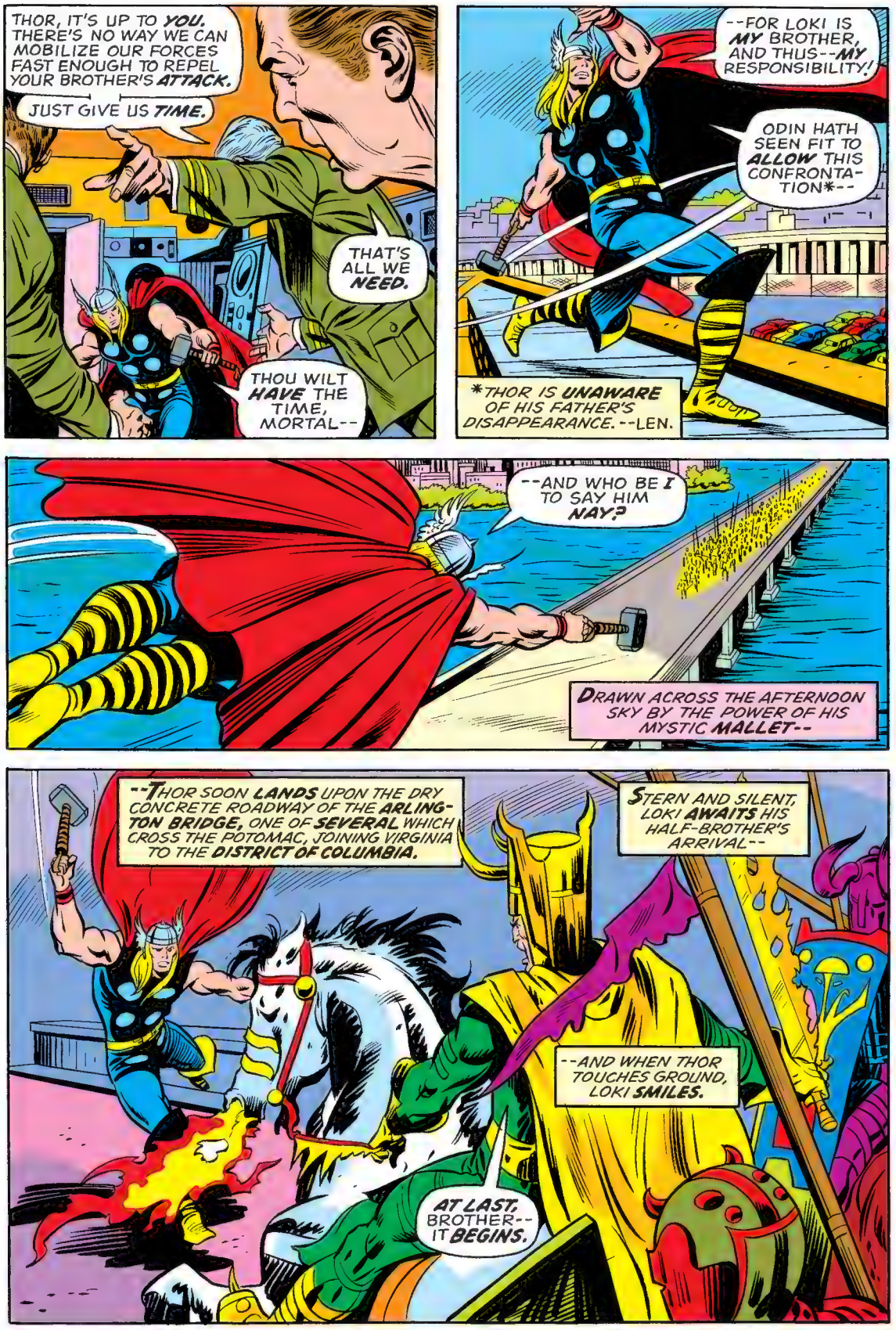

THOR.
HE HAS VISITED JANE FOSTER IN HER HOSPITAL ROOM, AND HAS LEARNED THERE'S BEEN NO CHANGE IN HER CONDITION.
SHE PREYS ON HIS THOUGHTS--BUT FOR THE MOMENT, HE'S PUT HER ASIDE.
NOW... HE LISTENS.

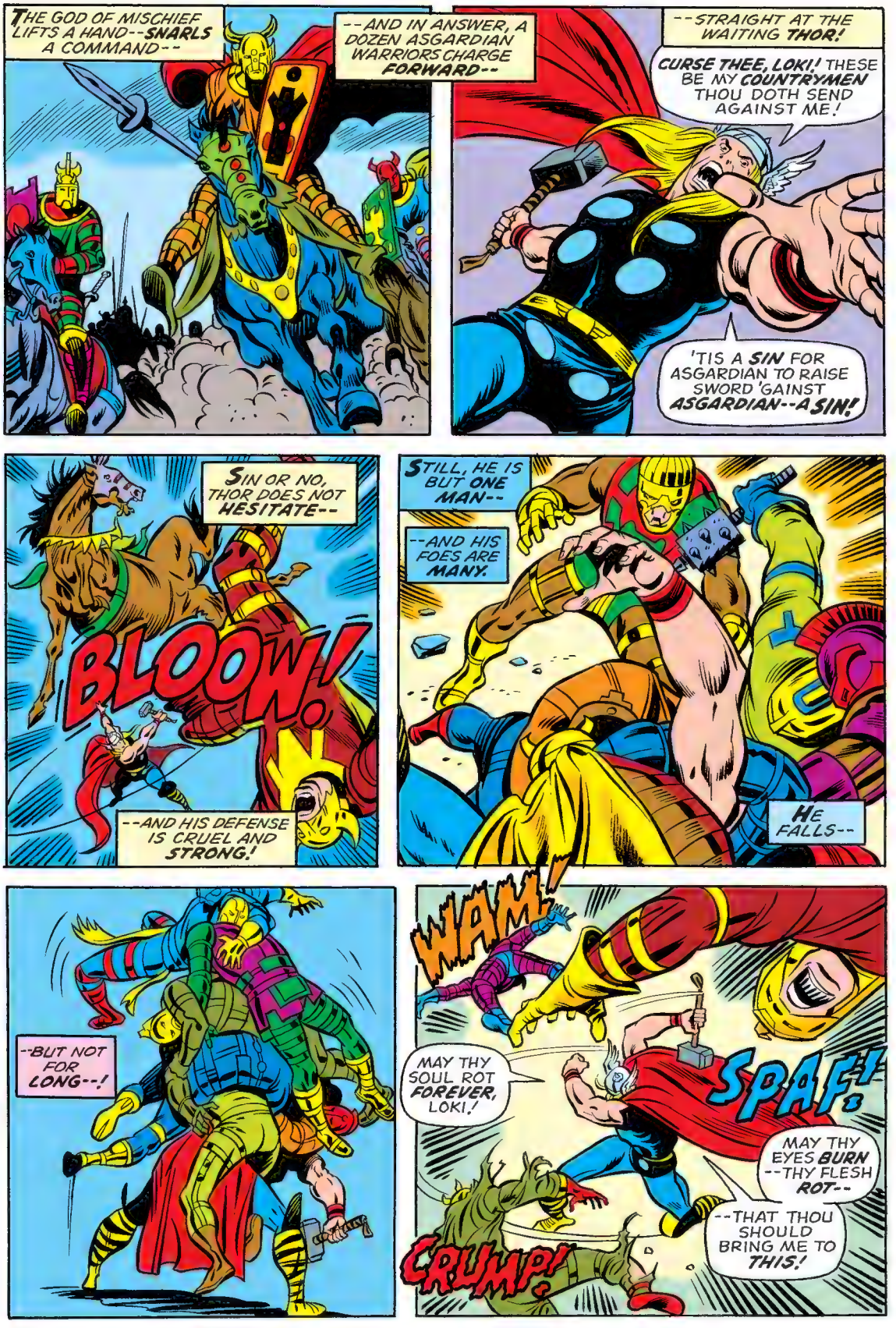
GLAD YOU COULD MAKE IT, THOR--CONSIDERING YOU'RE THE ONLY SO-CALLED "SUPER-HERO" WHO'S STILL ABLE TO MOVE FREELY.
SOMETHING STRANGE IS GOING ON, MISTER--

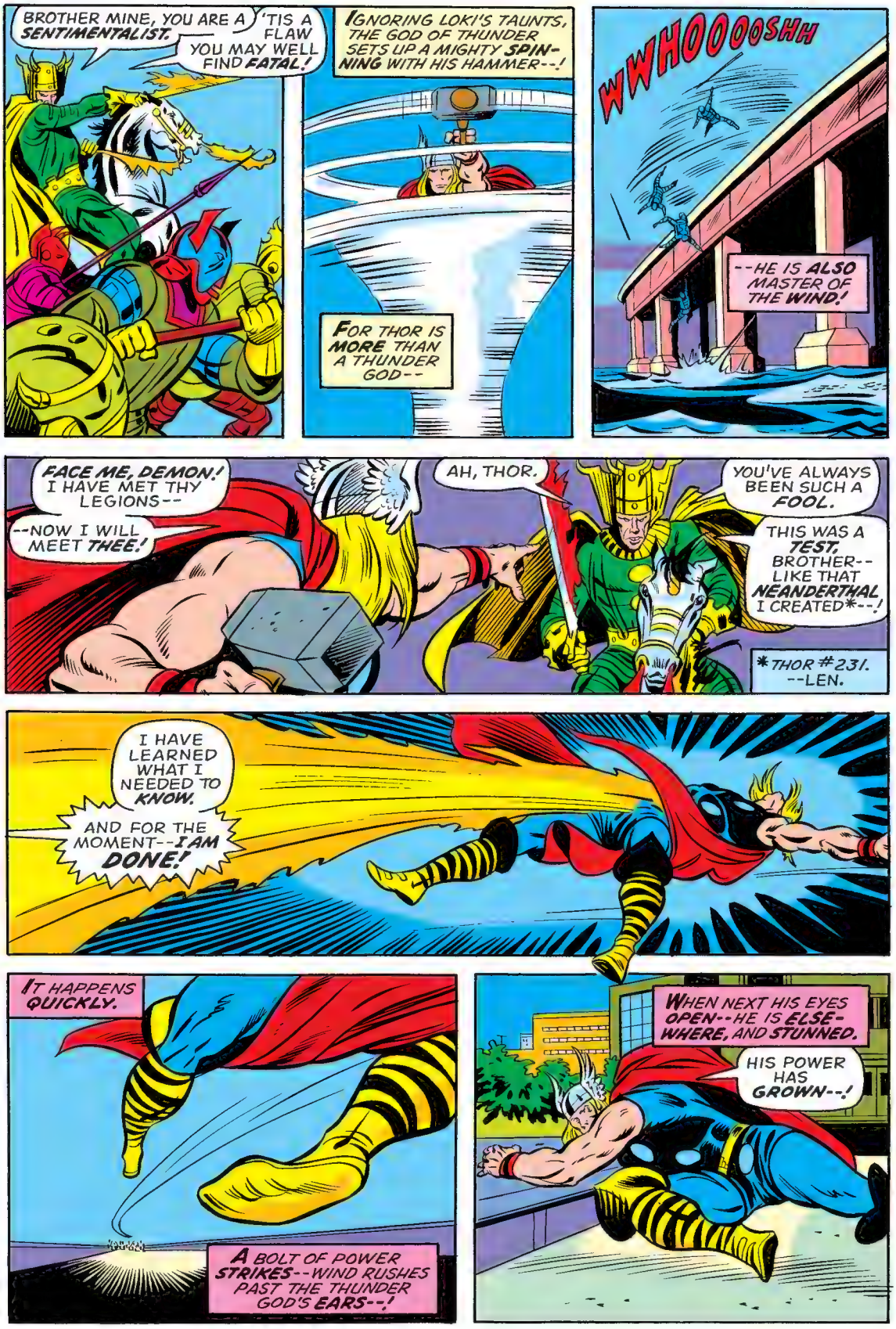

--SOMETHING WE DON'T EVEN PRETEND TO UNDERSTAND.
YOU TOLD ME WHAT HAPPENED TO THE AVENGERS MANSION--WELL, THE SAME THING'S HAPPENED TO THE BAXTER BUILDING.*
*WHERE THE FF HANG OUT, AS IF YOU DIDN'T KNOW. --LEN.

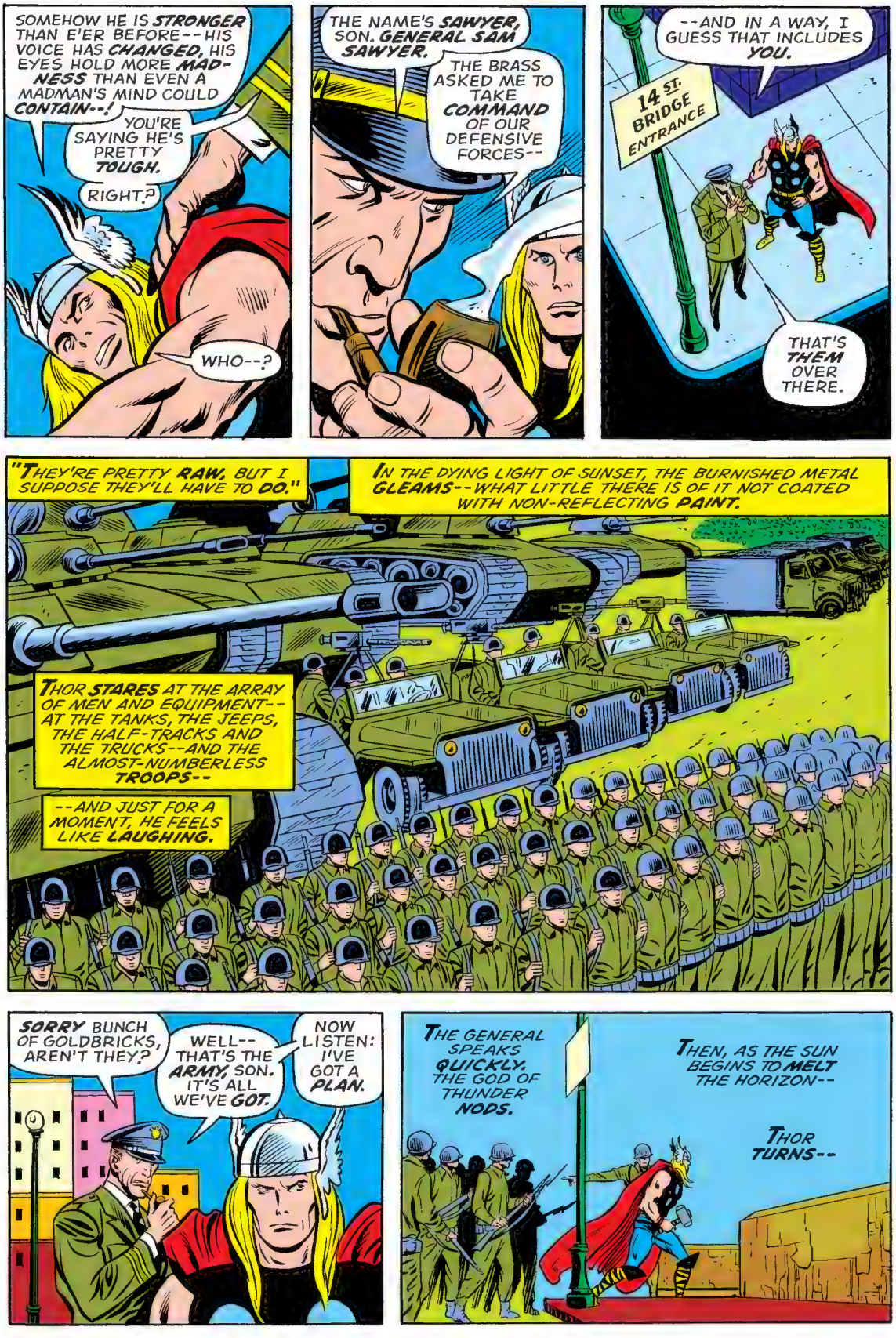

"AND THAT ISN'T ALL:
"ALL ACROSS THE COUNTRY, INDIVIDUAL 'HEROES' HAVE BEEN CAUGHT IN SMALLER FORCE-FIELDS:
"IN NEW YORK, SPIDER-MAN...
"IN SAN FRANCISCO, THE HULK...
"AND ELSEWHERE AROUND THE COUNTRY, OTHER HEROES IN OTHER FORCE-FIELDS: IN FACT--EVERY LAST SUPER-POWERED CHARACTER IN AMERICA IS COMPLETELY OUT OF ACTION--EXCEPT YOU.
"HAWKEYE.
"IRON MAN.
"DOCTOR STRANGE.
"THE SILVER SURFER.
"THE BLACK PANTHER.
"THE VISION.
"DAREDEVIL.
"MAYBE YOU CAN TELL ME WHY, THUNDER-GOD."
'TIS PART OF LOKI'S PLAN.
HE WISHES TO FIGHT ME ALONE--AND HE SHALL.
MAYBE--AND MAYBE NOT.
SEE THESE LIGHTED SPOTS ON THIS MAP?
THERE ARE OVER TWO HUNDRED OF THEM--

--AND AT EVERY SPOT, THERE'S ONE OF THESE, A GIGANTIC, GLISTENING CUBE.
PLUTO USED A SIMILAR DEVICE WHEN HE INVADED EARTH SOME TIME AGO.*
WHERE ARE THESE CUBES LOCATED, MORTAL?
AT EVERY IMPORTANT ARMY BASE IN THE U.S.--
--INCLUDING WASHINGTON, D.C..!
*BACK IN THOR #163-164. --LEN.
RRINGG
GENERAL ADAMS! IT'S THE GUARD AROUND THE WASHINGTON CUBE--!
SOMETHING'S HAPPENING THERE, SIR!
THE MONITOR SCREEN--LOOK AT THE SCREEN!
"THE CUBE-- IT'S OPENED--!
"AND LOOK WHAT'S COMING OUT!"
HEAR ME, THOR--FOR I KNOW YOU'RE WATCHING:
I DECLARE WAR BETWEEN YOU AND I!
WAR-- BETWEEN ASGARD AND EARTH!
FACE ME IF YOU DARE, FOR I SWEAR, BROTHER-- I WILL DESTROY YOU!


THOR, IT'S UP TO YOU. THERE'S NO WAY WE CAN MOBILIZE OUR FORCES FAST ENOUGH TO REPEL YOUR BROTHER'S ATTACK.
JUST GIVE US TIME.
THAT'S ALL WE NEED.
THOU WILT HAVE THE TIME, MORTAL--
--FOR LOKI IS MY BROTHER, AND THUS--MY RESPONSIBILITY!
ODIN HATH SEEN FIT TO ALLOW THIS CONFRONTATION*--
*THOR IS UNAWARE OF HIS FATHER'S DISAPPEARANCE. --LEN.
--AND WHO BE I TO SAY HIM NAY?
DRAWN ACROSS THE AFTERNOON SKY BY THE POWER OF HIS MYSTIC MALLET--
--THOR SOON LANDS UPON THE DRY CONCRETE ROADWAY OF THE ARLINGTON BRIDGE, ONE OF SEVERAL WHICH CROSS THE POTOMAC, JOINING VIRGINIA TO THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA.
STERN AND SILENT, LOKI AWAITS HIS HALF-BROTHER'S ARRIVAL--
--AND WHEN THOR TOUCHES GROUND, LOKI SMILES.
AT LAST, BROTHER--IT BEGINS.

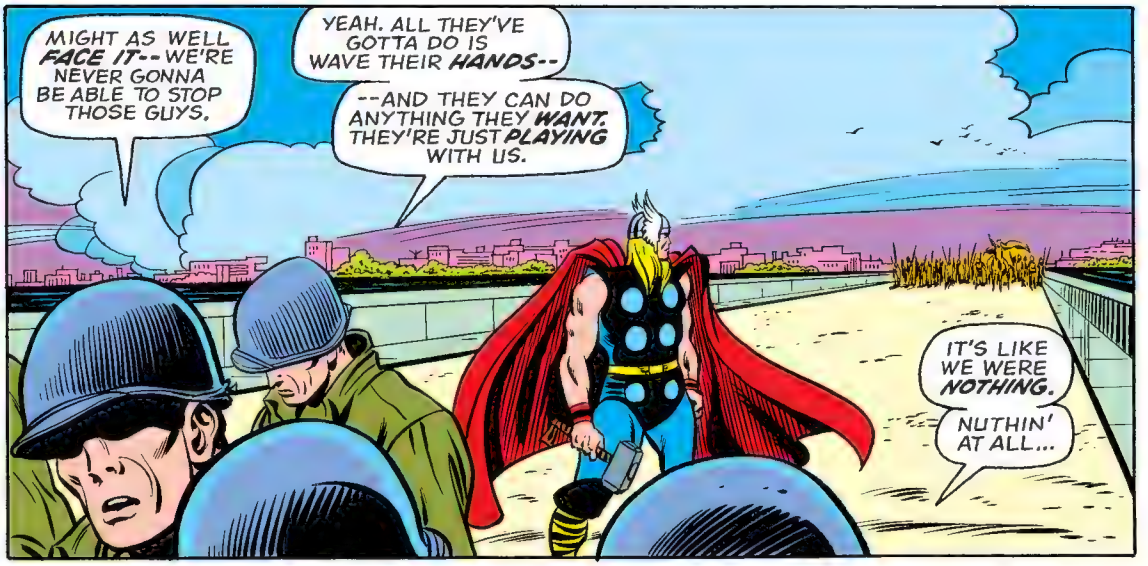

THE GOD OF MISCHIEF LIFTS A HAND--SNARLS A COMMAND--
--AND IN ANSWER, A DOZEN ASGARDIAN WARRIORS CHARGE FORWARD--
--STRAIGHT AT THE WAITING THOR!
CURSE THEE, LOKI! THESE BE MY COUNTRYMEN THOU DOTH SEND AGAINST ME!
'TIS A SIN FOR ASGARDIAN TO RAISE SWORD 'GAINST ASGARDIAN--A SIN!
SIN OR NO, THOR DOES NOT HESITATE--
BLOOW!
--AND HIS DEFENSE IS CRUEL AND STRONG!
STILL, HE IS BUT ONE MAN--
--AND HIS FOES ARE MANY.
HE FALLS--
--BUT NOT FOR LONG--!
WAM!
MAY THY SOUL ROT FOREVER, LOKI!
SPAF!
MAY THY EYES BURN --THY FLESH ROT--
--THAT THOU SHOULD BRING ME TO THIS!
CRUMP!

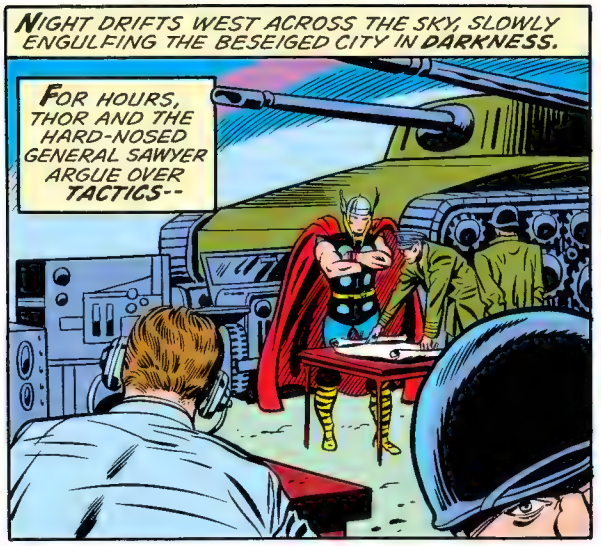

BROTHER MINE, YOU ARE A SENTIMENTALIST.
'TIS A FLAW YOU MAY WELL FIND FATAL!
IGNORING LOKI'S TAUNTS, THE GOD OF THUNDER SETS UP A MIGHTY SPINNING WITH HIS HAMMER--!
FOR THOR IS MORE THAN A THUNDER GOD--
WWHOOOOSHH
--HE IS ALSO MASTER OF THE WIND!
FACE ME, DEMON! I HAVE MET THY LEGIONS--
--NOW I WILL MEET THEE!
AH, THOR.
YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN SUCH A FOOL.
THIS WAS A TEST, BROTHER-- LIKE THAT NEANDERTHAL I CREATED*--!
*THOR #231. --LEN.
I HAVE LEARNED WHAT I NEEDED TO KNOW.
AND FOR THE MOMENT--I AM DONE!
IT HAPPENS QUICKLY.
A BOLT OF POWER STRIKES--WIND RUSHES PAST THE THUNDER GOD'S EARS--!
WHEN NEXT HIS EYES OPEN--HE IS ELSEWHERE, AND STUNNED.
HIS POWER HAS GROWN--!

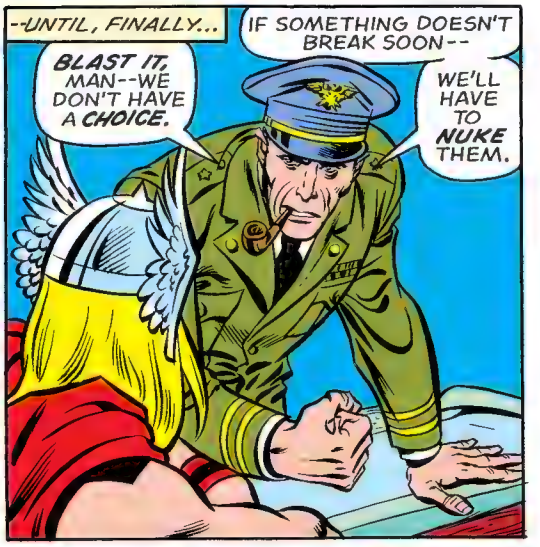

SOMEHOW HE IS STRONGER THAN E'ER BEFORE--HIS VOICE HAS CHANGED, HIS EYES HOLD MORE MADNESS THAN EVEN A MADMAN'S MIND COULD CONTAIN--!
YOU'RE SAYING HE'S PRETTY TOUGH.
RIGHT?
WHO--?
THE NAME'S SAWYER, SON. GENERAL SAM SAWYER.
THE BRASS ASKED ME TO TAKE COMMAND OF OUR DEFENSIVE FORCES--
--AND IN A WAY, I GUESS THAT INCLUDES YOU.
14 ST. BRIDGE ENTRANCE
THAT'S THEM OVER THERE.
"THEY'RE PRETTY RAW, BUT I SUPPOSE THEY'LL HAVE TO DO."
IN THE DYING LIGHT OF SUNSET, THE BURNISHED METAL GLEAMS--WHAT LITTLE THERE IS OF IT NOT COATED WITH NON-REFLECTING PAINT.
THOR STARES AT THE ARRAY OF MEN AND EQUIPMENT--AT THE TANKS, THE JEEPS, THE HALF-TRACKS AND THE TRUCKS--AND THE ALMOST-NUMBERLESS TROOPS--
--AND JUST FOR A MOMENT, HE FEELS LIKE LAUGHING.
SORRY BUNCH OF GOLDBRICKS, AREN'T THEY?
WELL--THAT'S THE ARMY, SON. IT'S ALL WE'VE GOT.
NOW LISTEN: I'VE GOT A PLAN.
THE GENERAL SPEAKS QUICKLY. THE GOD OF THUNDER NODS.
THEN, AS THE SUN BEGINS TO MELT THE HORIZON--
THOR TURNS--

--AND WITH THE ARMY CHARGING BEHIND HIM-- ATTACKS!
FOR EARTH--
--FOR ASGARD!
FOR LOKI!
FOR LOKKKKIIIII!
WHAT HAPPENS NEXT IS ALMOST INCONCEIVABLE:
MAN AGAINST MYTH--LEGIONS AGAINST LEGENDS--THE ARMIES OF EARTH AND ASGARD CLASH, WITH A SOUND THAT WOULD DROWN THE THUNDER!
AND, IN THE CENTER OF THE CHAOS AND CONFUSION, THERE IS LOKI--
--AND BATTLING HIM: THOR!

STEEL SPEARS STRIKE STEEL BAYONETS--ARMORED HELMET BATTERS ARMORED HELMET--MEN AND GODS ALIKE SCREAM THEIR FURY--
--AND WHILE THIS OCCURS ON THE BRIDGE ABOVE--
--FAR MORE IMPORTANT THINGS OCCUR BELOW!
RETREAT IS CALLED; THE HUMAN TROOPS WITHDRAW; AND, ALMOST BEFORE THEY REACH THEIR END OF THE BRIDGE--
--THE EXPLOSIVES SET BELOW THE BRIDGE--EXPLODE!
WHOOM!
GENERAL SAWYER SURE FIGURED IT CLOSE.
ANOTHER MOMENT AND OUR OWN MEN WOULD'VE--
SARGE, LOOK!
"WHERE THE BRIDGE BLEW UP--SOME KIND OF FORCE-FIELD'S APPEARED--!
"LOKI'S MEN AREN'T FALLING!"
THE MAD GOD LAUGHS, HIS FACE BRIGHT WITH INSANITY--
HA HA HA HA
--AND WITH THAT MOCKING LAUGHTER RINGING IN THEIR EARS, THE HUMAN ARMY CONTINUES ITS RETREAT--WALKING WITH THE SLOPED SHOULDERS AND TIRED EXPRESSIONS OF MEN WHO HAVE ALREADY ACCEPTED DEFEAT...!
HA HA HA

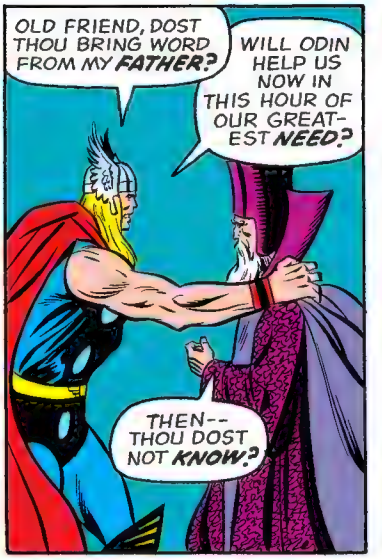

MIGHT AS WELL FACE IT--WE'RE NEVER GONNA BE ABLE TO STOP THOSE GUYS.
YEAH. ALL THEY'VE GOTTA DO IS WAVE THEIR HANDS--
--AND THEY CAN DO ANYTHING THEY WANT. THEY'RE JUST PLAYING WITH US.
IT'S LIKE WE WERE NOTHING.
NUTHIN' AT ALL...


NIGHT DRIFTS WEST ACROSS THE SKY, SLOWLY ENGULFING THE BESEIGED CITY IN DARKNESS.
FOR HOURS, THOR AND THE HARD-NOSED GENERAL SAWYER ARGUE OVER TACTICS--

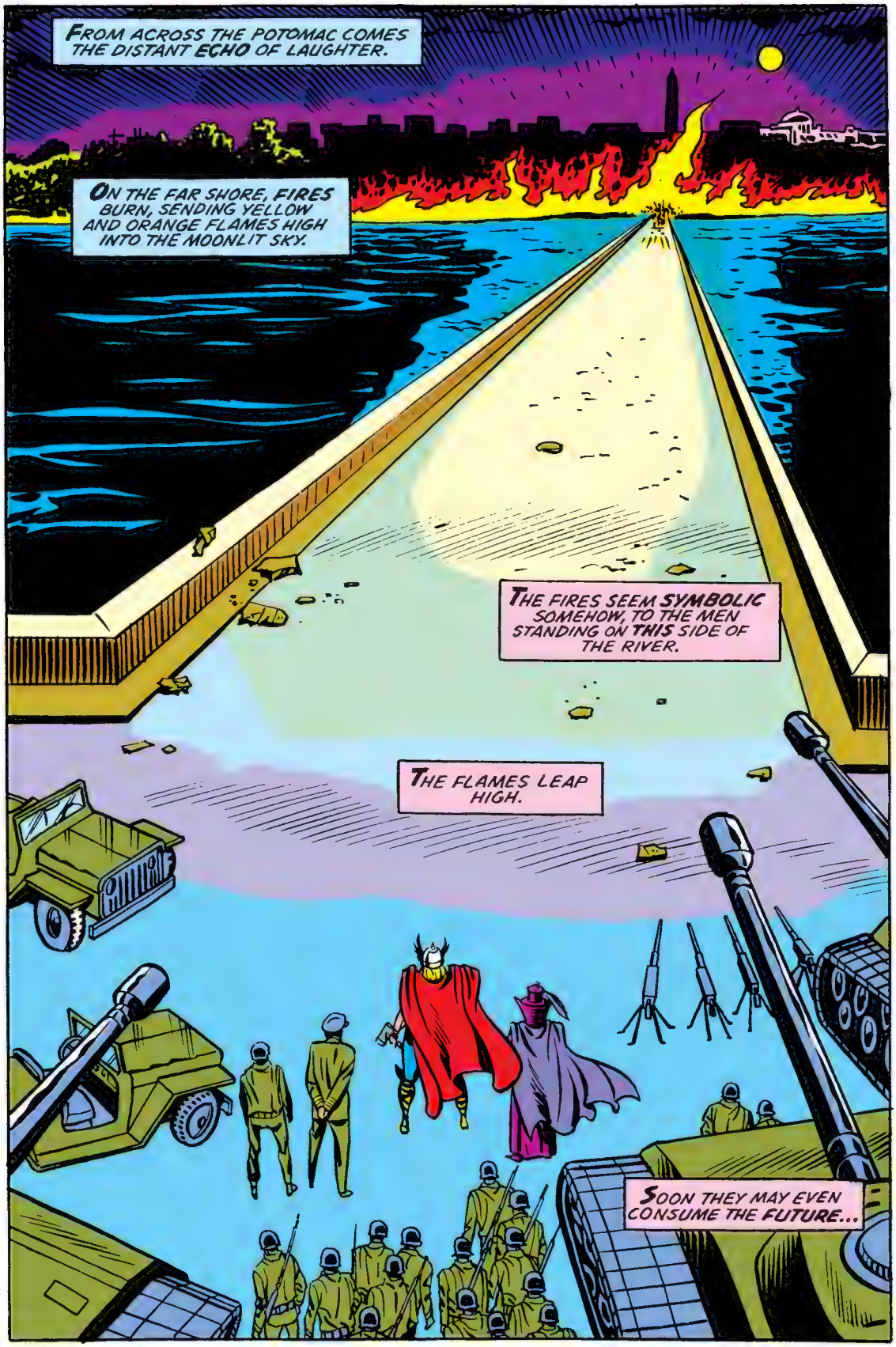

--UNTIL, FINALLY...
IF SOMETHING DOESN'T BREAK SOON--
BLAST IT, MAN--WE DON'T HAVE A CHOICE.
WE'LL HAVE TO NUKE THEM.

SURELY THOU CANNOT MEAN THOU WOULD JEOPARDIZE THE SAFETY OF AN ENTIRE CITY, WHEN--
'TIS NOT THIS CITY ALONE WHICH IS IN QUESTION, THOR.

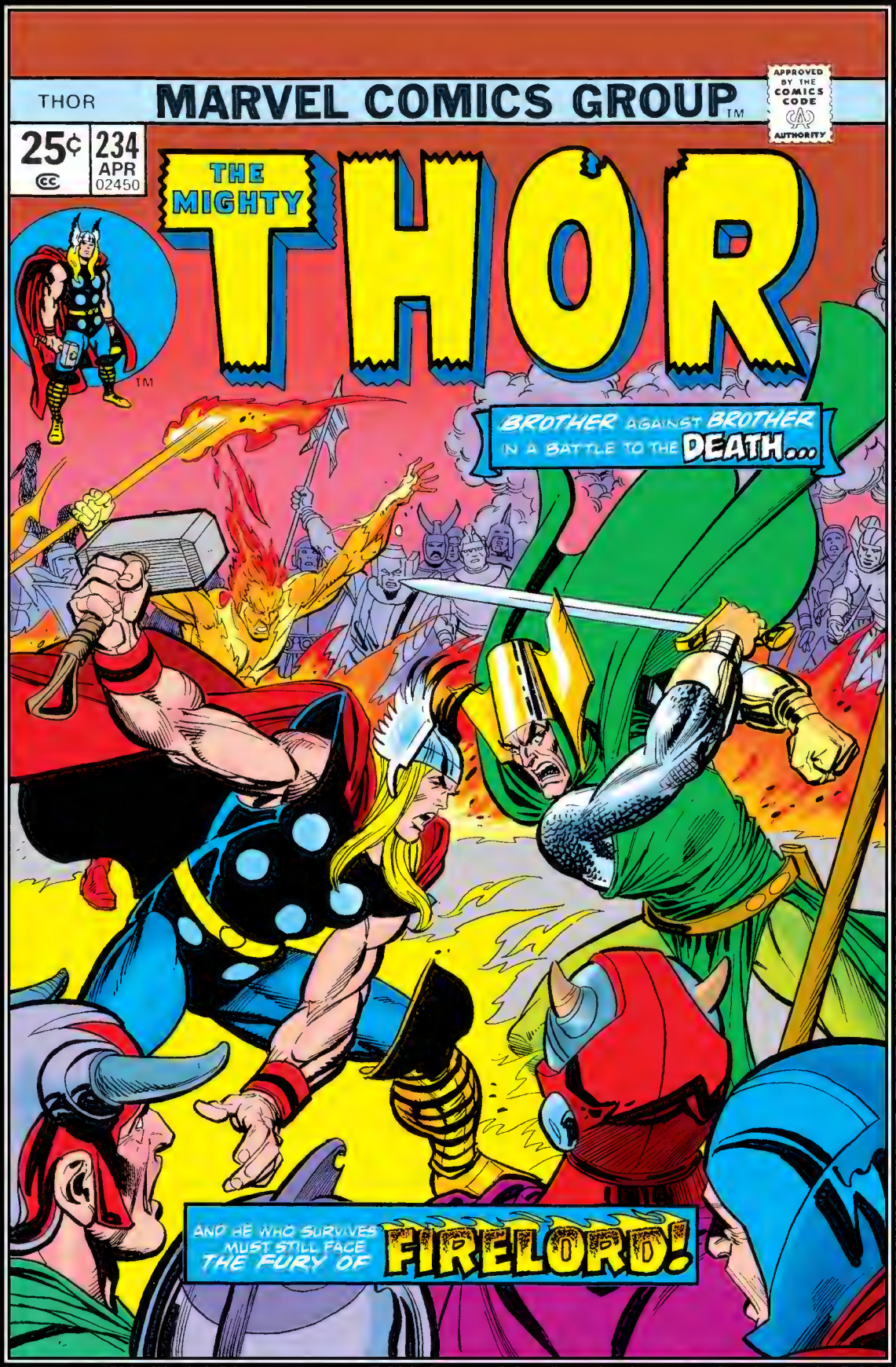
THE FUTURE OF THIS CIVILIZATION--PERHAPS MANKIND ITSELF--IS AT STAKE.
WE FOUND HIM OUTSIDE, SIR.
VIZIER!


OLD FRIEND, DOST THOU BRING WORD FROM MY FATHER?
WILL ODIN HELP US NOW IN THIS HOUR OF OUR GREATEST NEED?
THEN--THOU DOST NOT KNOW?

MY FRIEND, ODIN WILL BE OF NO HELP TO THEE OR THESE MORTALS.
HE HAS VANISHED, THOR. AS HE ONCE FORCED THEE TO TAKE ON A HUMAN FORM, IN ORDER TO LEARN TRUE HUMILITY--
--SO TOO HAS ODIN SACRIFICED HIS GODLY SELF--
--THAT HE MIGHT BECOME AS THESE MORTALS ARE, A MAN OF FLESH AND BLOOD, A CREATURE OF EMOTION, A DEMON POSSESSED BY MANY DEVILS.
BUT--IS HE NOT AWARE OF WHAT HAPPENS HERE?
AWARE HE MAY BE--
--BUT ONLY OF THIS, NOT OF HIS TRUE IDENTITY.
HE HAS PLACED HIMSELF UNDER A SPELL OF FORGETFULNESS, THUNDER GOD--A SPELL WHICH SHALL ENDURE FOR A TIME HE DID NOT REVEAL TO ME.
HE CANNOT AID US--BECAUSE HE DOES NOT KNOW HE CAN AID US.
WE MUST STAND OR FALL ALONE.
THEN IF WE MUST, WE WILL.
AS THE GENERAL SAID, WE HAVE NO CHOICE.


FROM ACROSS THE POTOMAC COMES THE DISTANT ECHO OF LAUGHTER.
ON THE FAR SHORE, FIRES BURN, SENDING YELLOW AND ORANGE FLAMES HIGH INTO THE MOONLIT SKY.
THE FIRES SEEM SYMBOLIC SOMEHOW, TO THE MEN STANDING ON THIS SIDE OF THE RIVER.
THE FLAMES LEAP HIGH.
SOON THEY MAY EVEN CONSUME THE FUTURE...

ALL ACROSS THE CONTINENT, THE SCENE IS MIMICKED ON A MUCH SMALLER SCALE...
A POPULACE WHICH HAS BEEN ENTERTAINED BY A SOUTH-ASIAN WAR FINDS ITSELF AMUSED BY A BATTLE FAR CLOSER TO HOME...
THOUGH, OF COURSE, NOT ALL WHO WATCH THIS NEW WAR FIND IT DIVERTING.
IN THE COMMUNAL HOME OF SEVERAL MIGRANT WORKERS IN CALIFORNIA, THE NEWS IS PROFOUNDLY DISTURBING.
KNEW IT WOULD HAPPEN, SOONER OR LATER.
WE ALWAYS HAD IT EASY IN THIS COUNTRY, NEVER BEIN' INVADED AN' ALL.
MY PARENTS, THEY CAME FROM AUSTRIA DURIN' THE GREAT WAR.
THEY TOLD ME HOW IT'D BE--AND THEY WAS RIGHT.
THE LARGE MAN SAYS NOTHING. HE SMOKES HIS PIPE AND LISTENS.
SOMETHING ABOUT WHAT HE SEES SEEMS TO TOUCH A CHORD WITHIN HIS MEMORY--BUT THE MEMORY IS TOO FAINT, TOO VAGUE AND ILL-FORMED.
HIS BROW FURROWS. HE FROWNS.
PERHAPS IF HE SLEEPS ON IT, HE'LL REMEMBER MORE IN THE MORNING.
PERHAPS, BUT ORRIN DOUBTS IT.
HE DOUBTS IT VERY MUCH INDEED...!
MORE ON ODIN'S ADVENTURES IN CALIFORNIA... AND THE STARTLING CLIMAX OF THE EARTH/ASGARD WAR, IN A TALE TITLED...
NEXT ISSUE:
O BITTER VICTORY!


THOR
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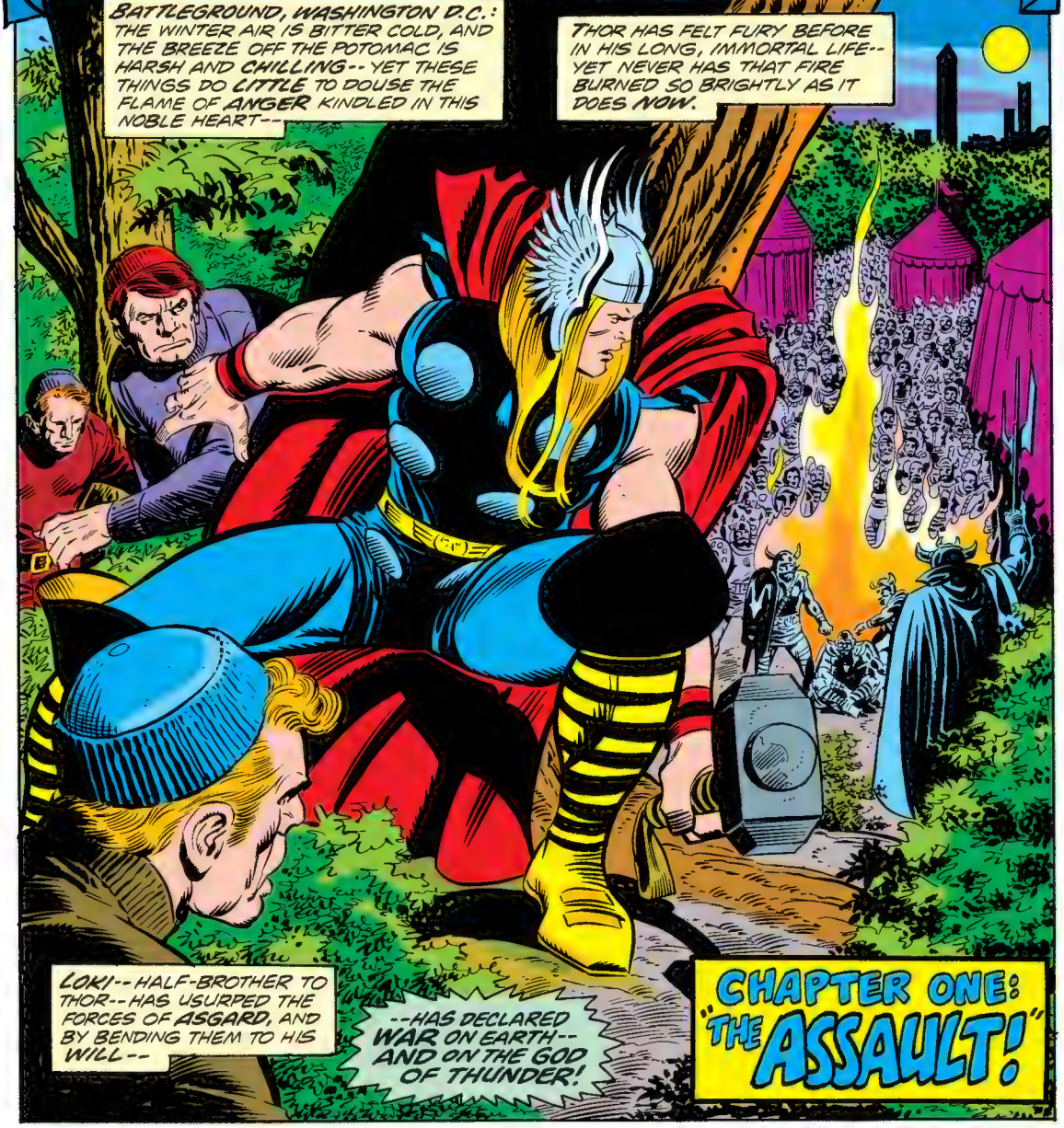
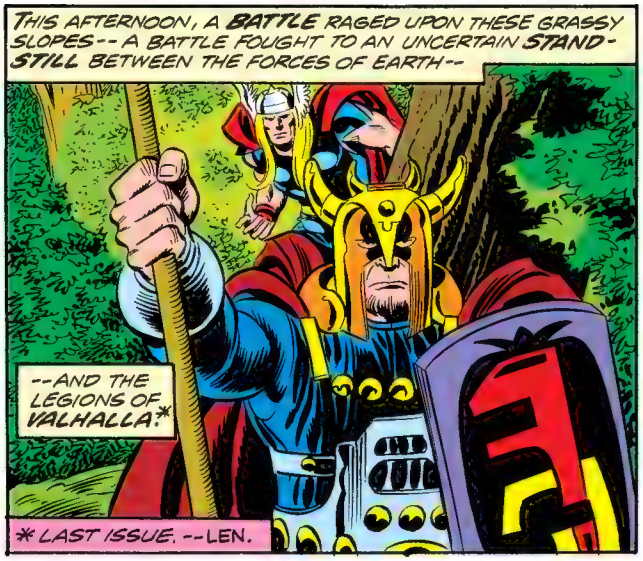
THE MIGHTY
THOR
BROTHER AGAINST BROTHER IN A BATTLE TO THE DEATH...
AND HE WHO SURVIVES MUST STILL FACE THE FURY OF FIRELORD!

Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE MIGHTY THOR!

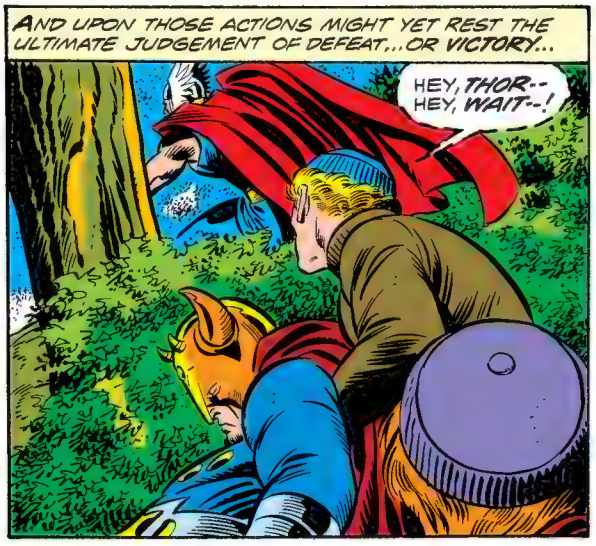
GERRY CONWAY / AUTHOR | JOHN BUSCEMA & JOE SINNOTT / ARTISTS | JOHN COSTANZA / letterer, PETRA GOLDBERG / colorist | CEN WEIN / EDITOR

O, BITTER VICTORY!


BATTLEGROUND, WASHINGTON D.C.: THE WINTER AIR IS BITTER COLD, AND THE BREEZE OFF THE POTOMAC IS HARSH AND CHILLING-- YET THESE THINGS DO LITTLE TO DOUSE THE FLAME OF ANGER KINDLED IN THIS NOBLE HEART--
THOR HAS FELT FURY BEFORE IN HIS LONG, IMMORTAL LIFE-- YET NEVER HAS THAT FIRE BURNED SO BRIGHTLY AS IT DOES NOW.
LOKI-- HALF-BROTHER TO THOR-- HAS USURPED THE FORCES OF ASGARD, AND BY BENDING THEM TO HIS WILL--
--HAS DECLARED WAR ON EARTH-- AND ON THE GOD OF THUNDER!
CHAPTER ONE: "THE ASSAULT!"

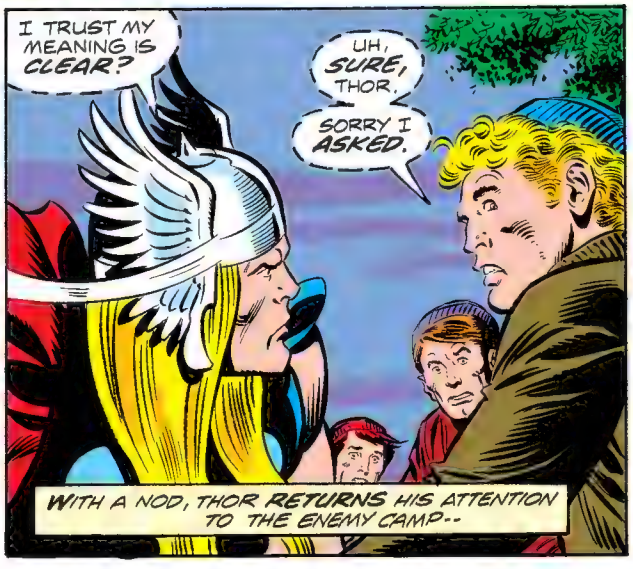

THIS AFTERNOON, A BATTLE RAGED UPON THESE GRASSY SLOPES-- A BATTLE FOUGHT TO AN UNCERTAIN STAND-STILL BETWEEN THE FORCES OF EARTH--
--AND THE LEGIONS OF VALHALLA.*
* LAST ISSUE. --LEN.

NIGHT FELL; THE ARMIES DREW BACK, TO AWAIT THE COMING OF DAWN-- WHEN THE QUESTION MIGHT BE POSED ANEW-- FOR A MORE FINAL ANSWER.
THAK!
YET, WHILE SOME SLEEP-- OTHERS ACT.


AND UPON THOSE ACTIONS MIGHT YET REST THE ULTIMATE JUDGEMENT OF DEFEAT...OR VICTORY...
HEY, THOR-- HEY, WAIT--!

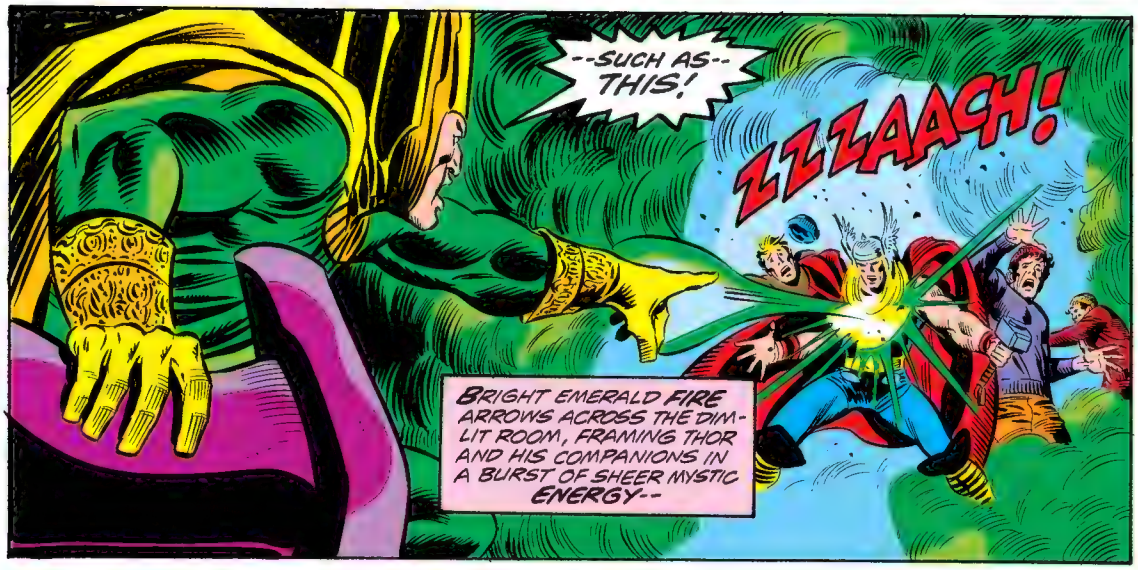
GENERAL SAWYER SAID WE WERE TO MAKE THIS MISSION AS A TEAM, THUNDER GOD.
IT'S TOO IMPORTANT FOR ONE OF US TO GO OFF HALF-COCKED--
--EVEN YOU.

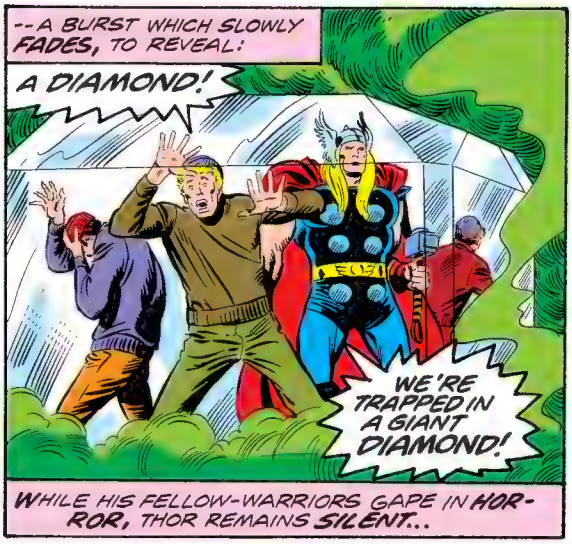
I DO APOLOGIZE TO THEE, WARRIOR--BUT METHINKS THOU DOTH PRESUME TOO MUCH.
'TIS MY BROTHER WHO DOTH COMMAND YON LEGION. 'TIS LOKI, LORD OF MISCHIEF.
IF HE IS TO FALL--IT MUST BE BY MY HAND.

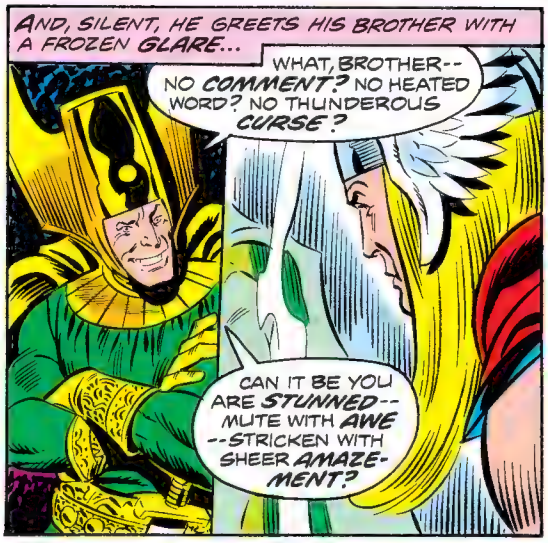

I TRUST MY MEANING IS CLEAR?
UH, SURE, THOR.
SORRY I ASKED.
WITH A NOD, THOR RETURNS HIS ATTENTION TO THE ENEMY CAMP--

ONCE MORE, HE FEELS A PANG OF SORROW THAT HIS LIFE SHOULD COME TO THE TURNING--THAT HE MUST FIGHT HIS FRIENDS AND FELLOW-ASGARDIANS, MEN HE'S KNOWN ALL HIS LIFE--
--MEN WHOSE MINDS HAVE BEEN TWISTED BY LOKI'S MAGIC SO THAT THEY NO LONGER KNOW RIGHT FROM WRONG--
--AND SEE ALL MORTALS TO BE ENEMIES!
LOKI: AS SO MANY TIMES BEFORE, THIS NIGHTMARE IS OF LOKI'S CONSTRUCTION.
HIS EYES BLURRED BY HATE, THOR CAN BARELY SEE THE TENT TOWARD WHICH HE IS LEADING HIS COMMANDO TEAM...
IT IS LOKI'S TENT--AND THE GUARDS OUTSIDE IT ARE LOKI'S GUARDS.
MOVING SO SILENTLY HE CAN SCARCELY HEAR HIMSELF BREATHE, THOR APPROACHES THE TALLER OF THE TWO RENEGADE WARRIORS--
--AND WITHOUT A WORD OF WARNING--
STRIKES!
KRRRKK

MY FRIEND, THIS DOTH PAIN ME GREATLY-- BUT WHAT I DO, I MUST--
--BOTH FOR THE PLANET EARTH--
--AND FOR THE MEMORY OF ASGARD!
SWATT!
I GUESS LUCK'S ON OUR SIDE TONIGHT, THUNDER GOD.
NO ONE SEEMS TO HAVE NOTICED OUR LITTLE STRUGGLE. THE COAST IS AS CLEAR AS IT'S GONNA GET.
THEN I SUGGEST WE ACT WHILE WE MAY--
--FOR LUCK IS A MOST TREACHEROUS IMP, ONE WHO VERY OFTEN--
--CHANGES SIDES.
QUITE TRUE, DEAR BROTHER-- QUITE TRUE.
ONE MIGHT ALMOST SAY LUCK HAS NO SENSE OF DECENCY. AT THE VERY LEAST, SHE MAKES A MOCKERY OF THE TERM--"FAIR PLAY".
WOULD YOU NOT AGREE-- UNLUCKY BROTHER OF MINE?
OR MUST YOU HAVE FURTHER PROOF OF LUCK'S INFIDELITY--

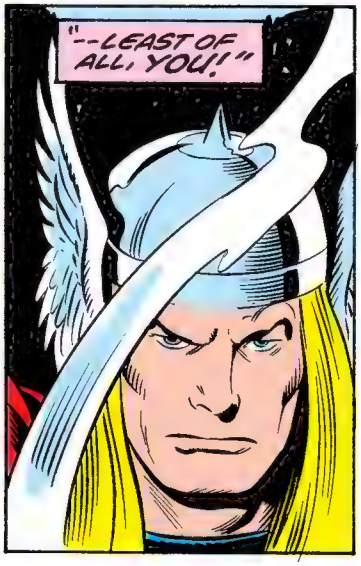

--SUCH AS-- THIS!
ZZZAACH!
BRIGHT EMERALD FIRE ARROWS ACROSS THE DIM-LIT ROOM, FRAMING THOR AND HIS COMPANIONS IN A BURST OF SHEER MYSTIC ENERGY--

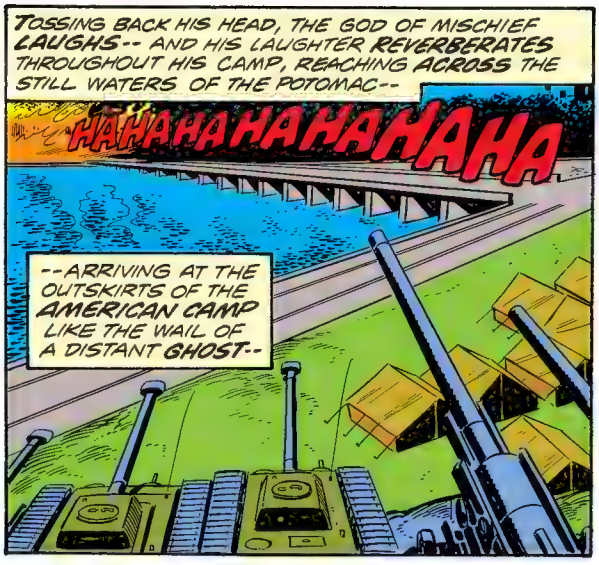

--A BURST WHICH SLOWLY FADES, TO REVEAL:
A DIAMOND!
WE'RE TRAPPED IN A GIANT DIAMOND!
WHILE HIS FELLOW-WARRIORS GAPE IN HORROR, THOR REMAINS SILENT...


AND, SILENT, HE GREETS HIS BROTHER WITH A FROZEN GLARE...
WHAT, BROTHER-- NO COMMENT? NO HEATED WORD? NO THUNDEROUS CURSE?
CAN IT BE YOU ARE STUNNED-- MUTE WITH AWE --STRICKEN WITH SHEER AMAZEMENT?

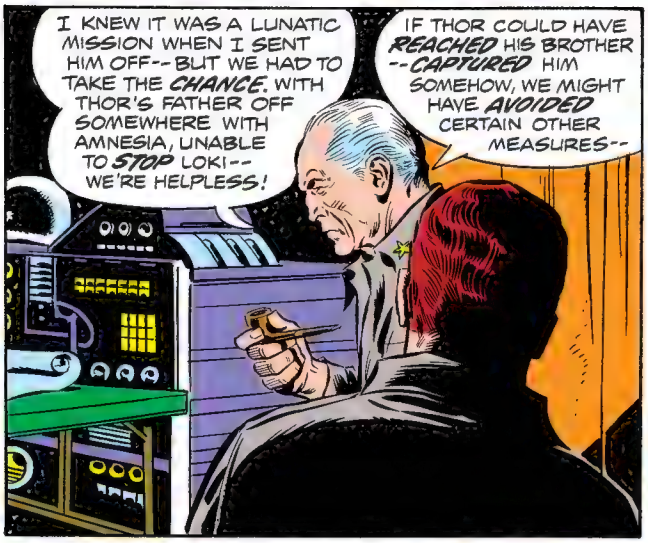
FOOL! WITLING! CHILD!
AFTER ALL THESE YEARS, YOU ARE STILL AS IGNORANT OF MY TRUE POWER AS YOU EVER WERE--
I AM LOKI, HALF-BROTHER...LOKI, SON OF THE STORM GIANTS, LORD HIGH KING OF ASGARD!

AND SOON, MY BROTHER-- SOON, MY MOST HATED SIBLING--I WILL BE LORD HIGH KING OF YOUR PRECIOUS MIDGARD, AS WELL.
AT DAWN, MY ARMY WILL STRIKE-- AND NONE MAY STOP ME, THOR--


"--LEAST OF ALL, YOU!"

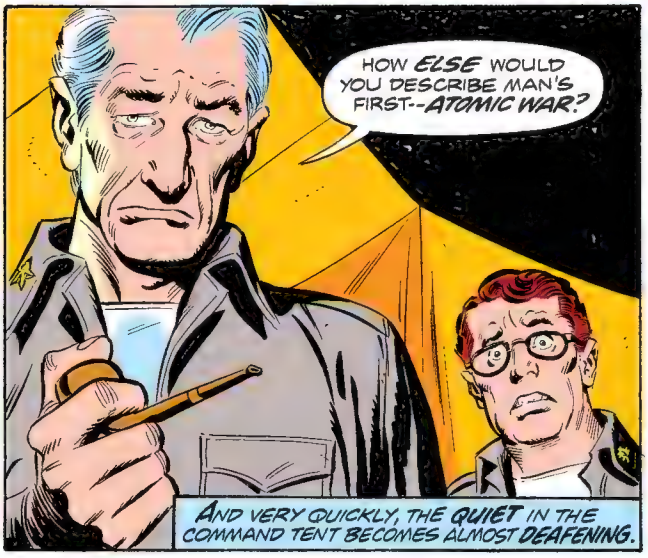

TOSSING BACK HIS HEAD, THE GOD OF MISCHIEF LAUGHS-- AND HIS LAUGHTER REVERBERATES THROUGHOUT HIS CAMP, REACHING ACROSS THE STILL WATERS OF THE POTOMAC--
HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA
--ARRIVING AT THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE AMERICAN CAMP LIKE THE WAIL OF A DISTANT GHOST--

--AND ECHOING THROUGH THE CAMP, DISTURBING ALL WHO HEAR IT--ESPECIALLY THOSE WITH THE BURDEN OF COMMAND:
IT'S HIM, ISN'T IT, GENERAL SAWYER?
AND IF HE'S LAUGHING, THEN THAT MEANS--
IT MEANS THOR HAS FAILED, MAJOR.


I KNEW IT WAS A LUNATIC MISSION WHEN I SENT HIM OFF--BUT WE HAD TO TAKE THE CHANCE. WITH THOR'S FATHER OFF SOMEWHERE WITH AMNESIA, UNABLE TO STOP LOKI-- WE'RE HELPLESS!
IF THOR COULD HAVE REACHED HIS BROTHER --CAPTURED HIM SOMEHOW, WE MIGHT HAVE AVOIDED CERTAIN OTHER MEASURES--

--MEASURES WHICH ARE NOW-- UNAVOIDABLE.
YOU REALIZE THIS IS THE END, DON'T YOU, MAJOR? EVEN IF WE MANAGE TO DESTROY LOKI'S FORCE --THIS IS THE LAST NIGHT FOR CIVILIZATION AS WE KNOW IT.

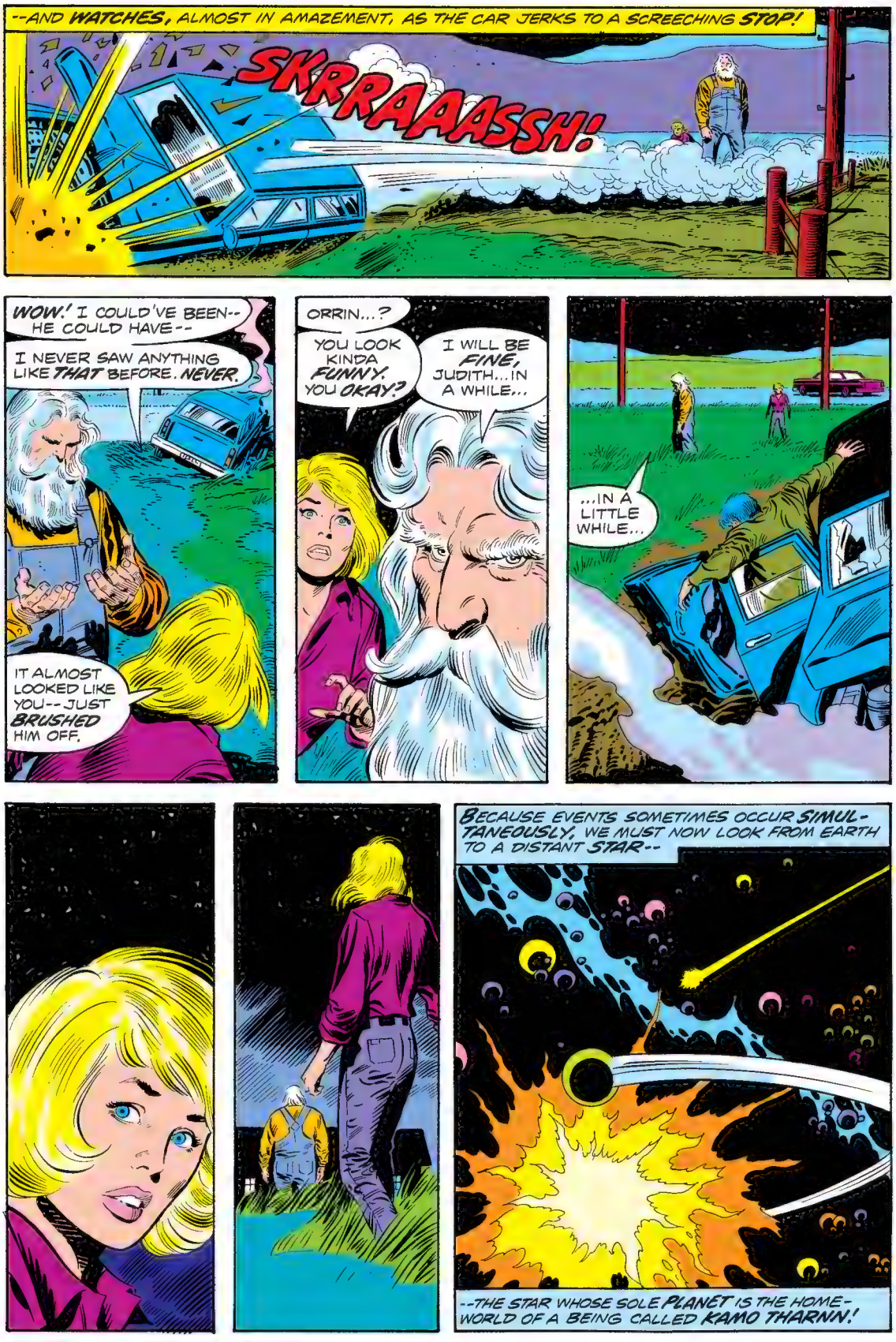
SURELY YOU'RE EXAGGERATING, SIR...
AM I? "END OF THE WORLD" SOUNDS A LITTLE TOO STRONG FOR YOU, EH, MAJOR?
TELL ME, THEN--


HOW ELSE WOULD YOU DESCRIBE MAN'S FIRST--ATOMIC WAR?
AND VERY QUICKLY, THE QUIET IN THE COMMAND TENT BECOMES ALMOST DEAFENING.

CHAPTER TWO: "DECISION AT DAWN!"

ELSEWHERE THIS NIGHT, OTHERS ALSO SEARCH THE STARLIT SKY FOR ANSWERS... AND FOR SOME OF THOSE WHO SEARCH, IN PARTICULAR THIS MAN STANDING IN A FIELD OUTSIDE A CALIFORNIA COMMUNE FARMHOUSE, EVEN THE QUESTIONS... ARE MYSTERIES...
ORRIN? SAY... ORRIN?
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
MY MIND IS FULL OF MANY THINGS, JUDITH.
WHAT WE SAW ON TELEVISION-- THAT DISTURBANCE IN WASHINGTON-- IT WORRIES ME, FOR A REASON I CANNOT NAME.
YOU MEAN YOU BELIEVE ALL THAT BUNK?
BUNK?
SURE-- IT'S ALL A HOAX, ORRIN. EVERYONE KNOWS THAT.
IT'S JUST ANOTHER TRICK, THAT'S ALL
AH, JUDITH...
...CYNICISM IS FOR THE OLD, IS IT NOT?
SURELY, ONE AS YOUNG AS THEE--
LISTEN, ORRIN-- THERE'S SOMETHING YOU'VE GOT TO GET STRAIGHT:
JUST 'CAUSE I'M YOUNG, DOESN'T MEAN I'M STUPID.
MY GENERATION MAY NOT BE ANY SMARTER THAN YOUR GENERATION WAS WHEN YOU WERE OUR AGE--
--BUT WE'VE GOT A HECK OF A LOT MORE INFORMATION ON HAND--

--AND IF WE HAPPEN TO BECOME A LITTLE CYNICAL BECAUSE OF WHAT WE HEAR--
--IT ISN'T OUR FAULT--
--IT'S BECAUSE THE INFORMATION TELLS US--
JUDITH--
SCREEECHNRASH!
LOOK OUT!
HEY--!
BLASSHTED JUNKHEAP! SHHHOULD'VE TRADED HER IN WHEN I HAD THE CHANCE!
HEY, GRAMPA-- LOOKOUT WHERE'S YA GOIN'--!
ACTING INSTINCTIVELY, THE MASSIVE OLD MAN CALLED "ORRIN" STRETCHES OUT A HAND-- AND AS CASUALLY AS ANOTHER MAN MIGHT SWAT A FLY--
SKAWHOMP!
--HE KNOCKS THE DRUNKEN DRIVER'S CAREENING STATION WAGON ASIDE--


--AND WATCHES, ALMOST IN AMAZEMENT, AS THE CAR JERKS TO A SCREECHING STOP!
SKRRAAASSH!
WOW! I COULD'VE BEEN-- HE COULD HAVE--
I NEVER SAW ANYTHING LIKE THAT BEFORE. NEVER.
IT ALMOST LOOKED LIKE YOU-- JUST BRUSHED HIM OFF.
ORRIN...?
YOU LOOK KINDA FUNNY. YOU OKAY?
I WILL BE FINE, JUDITH... IN A WHILE...
...IN A LITTLE WHILE...
BECAUSE EVENTS SOMETIMES OCCUR SIMULTANEOUSLY, WE MUST NOW LOOK FROM EARTH TO A DISTANT STAR--
--THE STAR WHOSE SOLE PLANET IS THE HOME-WORLD OF A BEING CALLED KAMO THARNN!

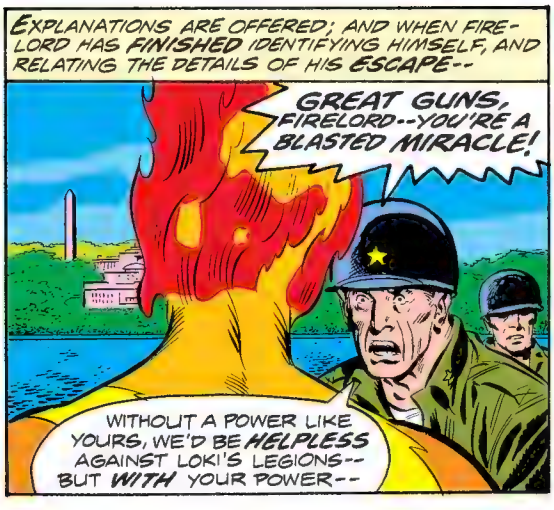
FROM OUT OF THE ENDLESS NIGHT ENCIRCLING THIS COLD, DEAD WORLD--A BOLT OF COSMIC ENERGY COMES ARROWING TOWARD THE PLANET'S SURFACE--
--WHERE IT TRANSFORMS INTO TWO FAMILIAR FIGURES--
--THE GODDESS SIF, LADY OF ASGARD--AND HERCULES, PRINCE OF OLYMPUS!
BY MY SOUL, MILADY--'TIS A MOST PASSING STRANGE WORLD THOU HAST BROUGHT US TO--
--A LAND AS DEAD AS LORD PLUTO'S SOUL!
AYE, HERCULES--BUT 'TIS HERE THAT KAMO THARNN HAS CHOSEN TO LIVE.
AND 'TIS HERE WE SHALL FIND HIM--AND HIS MYSTIC RUNE-STAFF! *
*THEY STARTED ON THEIR QUEST TWO ISSUES AGO. --LEN.
THERE, HERCULES--DOST THOU SEE IT?
YONDER LIES THE ETERNAL BEACON--THAT WHICH MARKS THE PALACE OF KAMO THARNN.
TELL ME, GIRL--DOST THOU TRULY BELIEVE THIS RUNE-STAFF CAN SAVE THE MORTAL FEMALE--JANE FOSTER?
I KNOW ONLY THIS, OLYMPIAN:
THOR IS MY BELOVED--AND JANE FOSTER IS HIS BELOVED--AND SHE IS DYING--!
IF ANYTHING I CAN DO MAY SAVE HER LIFE--THEN I AM BOUND TO DO IT--
--EVEN IF THE SAVING DOTH COST ME THOR--
--FOR SUCH IS THE NATURE--
--OF LOVE.

SIMULTANEITY: THE EFFECT BY WHICH TWO INCIDENTS OCCUR AT THE SAME INSTANT.
YOU'RE WITNESSING THAT EFFECT NOW--FOR, AT THE SAME MOMENT DURING WHICH OUR PREVIOUS TWO SCENES OCCURED--
NO U TURN
FFFOOOSSH!
--THIS SCENE ALSO OCCURS, HERE, OUTSIDE THE AVENGERS MANSION IN NEW YORK--
--WHERE AN EXTREMELY ANGRY FIRELORD TRIES TO BURN THROUGH THE FORCE-FIELD WITH WHICH LOKI HAS SEALED OFF THE AVENGERS FROM HIS EARTH/ASGARD WAR--!
TRIES--AND FAILS--!
STOP IT, FIRELORD--I SAID, STOP IT!
UNHAND ME! NO ONE MAY TOUCH ME, AVENGER--NOT EVEN YOU.
I WILL BREAK THROUGH THIS BARRIER! IN THE NAME OF GALACTUS, MY FORMER MASTER--
I SWEAR IT!
EASY, FRIEND--THIS IS IRON MAN YOU'RE TALKING TO, NOT SOME FOURTH-GRADE FLUNKY.
YOU WON'T BREAK THROUGH THE BARRIER ALONE--BUT IT'S JUST POSSIBLE, IF WE WORK AS A TEAM--
A TEAM?
HASTILY, A PLAN IS FORMED; AND A SHORT WHILE LATER, TWO MIGHTY POWERS JOIN TOGETHER--
--REPULSOR RAYS ADD THEIR FORCE TO COSMIC FLAMES--

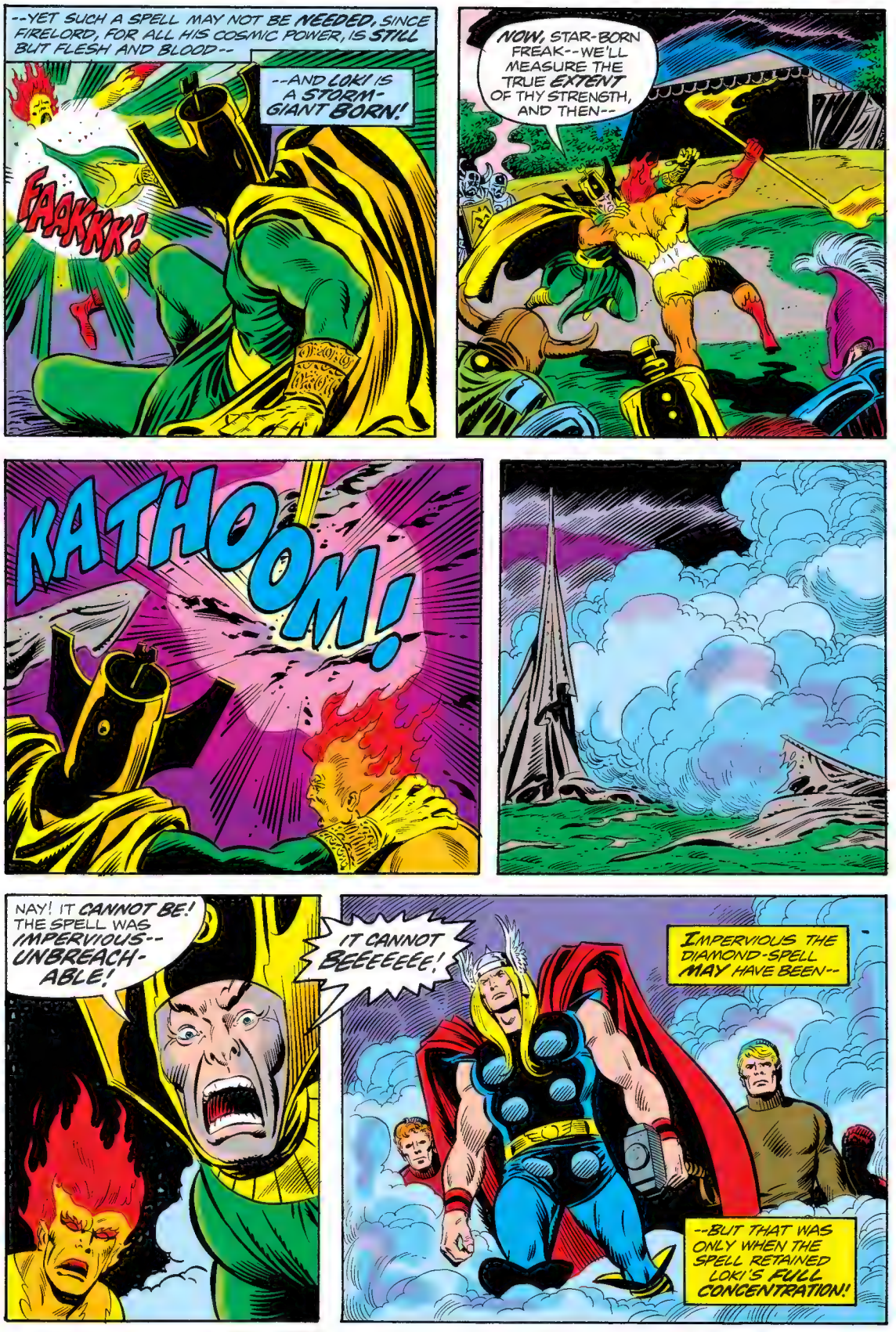
--AND THE TWO POWERS FLARE, UNTIL--
THEN--USE IT--FIRELORD--!
REPULSOR RAYS--DRAINED TOO MUCH--POWER--
STAR WINDS! WE'VE DONE IT, AVENGER--THE BARRIER IS BREACHED!
--CAN'T--EVEN--STAND UP--TOO WEAK--!
THEN I MUST FIGHT FOR BOTH OF US, MY FRIEND.
I PROMISE YOU, I'LL NOT FAIL--
--NOT IF ALL THE FORCES OF HELL RISE AGAINST ME!
THEY JUST MIGHT, FIRELORD.
THEY JUST...MIGHT...
AS THE ASGARDIAN FEMALE CALLED KRISTA SUPPORTS THE WEAKENED IRON MAN, THE MOMENTARY GAP IN THE FORCE FIELD SLAMS SHUT--
--AND WE TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO TURN SEVERAL HOURS AHEAD, TO A COLD WHITE DAWN IN WASHINGTON, D.C.... WHERE A FATAL COMMAND IS ABOUT TO BE GIVEN BY--
GENERAL SAWYER--WE HAVE THE PRESIDENT'S AUTHORIZATION.
IT'S UP TO YOU, SIR. DO WE DROP THE BOMB ON THE ASGARDIAN ARMY, OR--WHAT?
MAJOR, THERE'S NO OTHER CHOICE: WE DROP.
AND MAY GOD HAVE MERCY ON US ALL.

CHAPTER THREE: "SIXTY SECONDS TO DIE!"

THE DAWN STILLNESS IS COMPLETE; IN THE HUSH FOLLOWING GENERAL SAM SAWYER'S WORDS, ALL MEN PRESENT FEEL A PRESSURE ON THEIR SHOULDERS--ALMOST A PHYSICAL PRESSURE, AS THOUGH THE WEIGHT OF A UNIVERSE WERE THRUSTING DOWN ON THEM.
EACH MAN LOOKS INWARD AT HIMSELF--AND SOME OF THE MEN DON'T QUITE LIKE WHAT THEY SEE.
BUT, BEFORE ANY MAN PRESENT CAN REACT FULLY TO THE UTTER DRAMA OF THE MOMENT--THE STILLNESS IS RUDELY EXPLODED, AS--

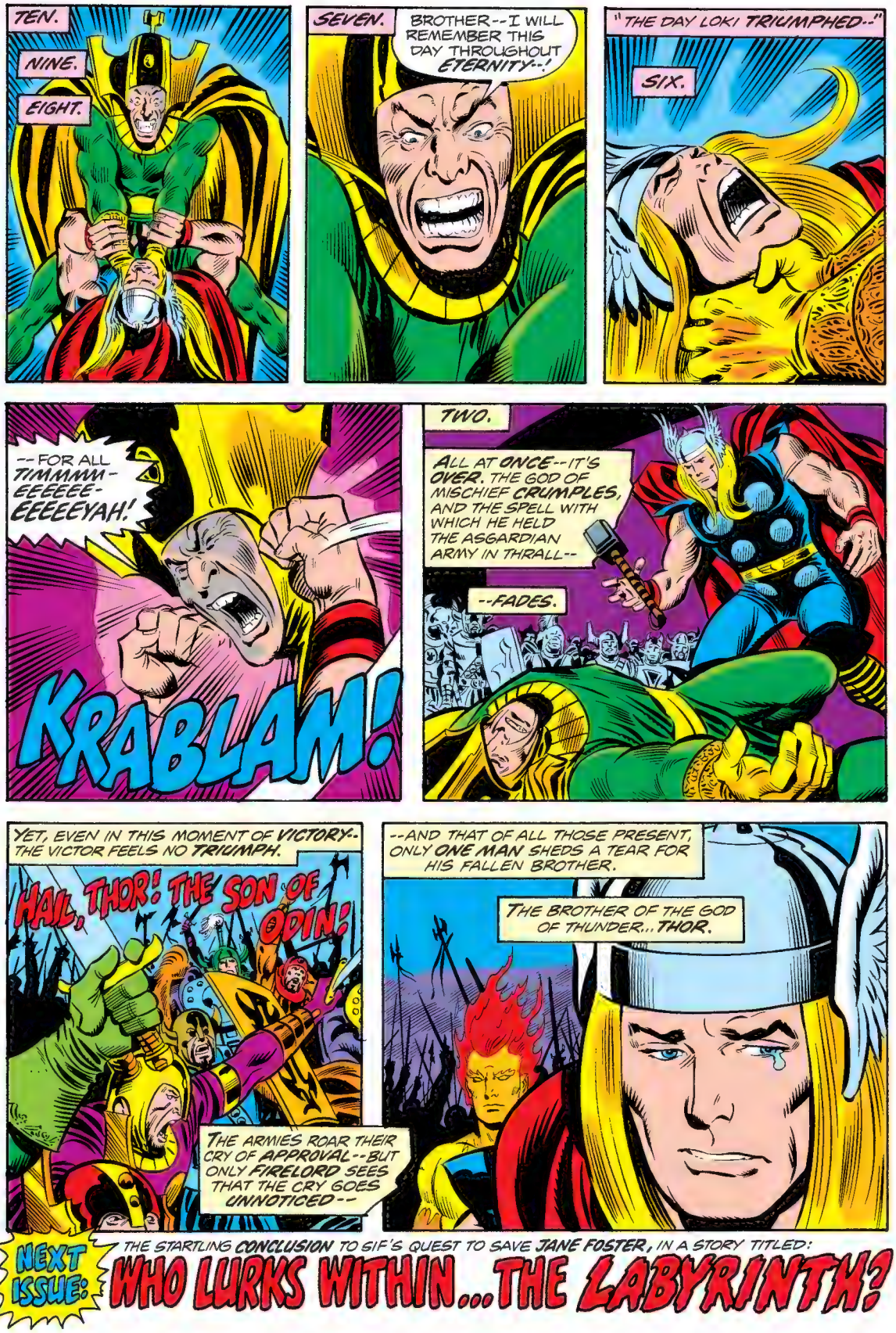

EXPLANATIONS ARE OFFERED; AND WHEN FIRELORD HAS FINISHED IDENTIFYING HIMSELF, AND RELATING THE DETAILS OF HIS ESCAPE--
GREAT GUNS, FIRELORD--YOU'RE A BLASTED MIRACLE!
WITHOUT A POWER LIKE YOURS, WE'D BE HELPLESS AGAINST LOKI'S LEGIONS--BUT WITH YOUR POWER--

--AND EVEN TRIUMPH!
HOWLING LIKE MEN GONE MAD, THE AMERICAN FORCES CHARGE ACROSS THE ARLINGTON BRIDGE--
--FOLLOWING A CREATURE SO BIZARRE HE WOULD NORMALLY BE CALLED A NIGHTMARE--
--THOUGH TODAY HE IS ANYTHING BUT THAT:
TODAY, HE IS THAT MOST TRANSIENT OF THINGS--
--A HERO!
NAY, 'TIS AN ILLUSION!
THE BEING WHOM I USED AS BUT A MES-SENGER TO CARRY MY PLAN TO THOR*-- NOW ATTACKS ME--
*IN THOR #232.--LEN.
--AND SENDS MY MEN TO ROUT!
BACK, FOOL! YOU APPROACH THE PRESENCE IMPERIAL!
YOU ATTACK LOKI--
LOKI
CAUGHT OFF-BALANCE, THE GOD OF MISCHIEF HAS NO TIME TO CAST A RESTRAINING SPELL--


--YET SUCH A SPELL MAY NOT BE NEEDED, SINCE FIRELORD, FOR ALL HIS COSMIC POWER, IS STILL BUT FLESH AND BLOOD--
--AND LOKI IS A STORM-GIANT BORN!
FAAKKK!
NOW, STAR-BORN FREAK--WE'LL MEASURE THE TRUE EXTENT OF THY STRENGTH, AND THEN--
KATHOOM!
NAY! IT CANNOT BE! THE SPELL WAS IMPERVIOUS--UNBREACH-ABLE!
IT CANNOT BEEEEEEE!
IMPERVIOUS THE DIAMOND-SPELL MAY HAVE BEEN--
--BUT THAT WAS ONLY WHEN THE SPELL RETAINED LOKI'S FULL CONCENTRATION!

AND DURING HIS BRIEF SKIRMISH WITH FIRELORD-- LOKI'S CONCENTRATION WAS SOMEWHAT--
BROKEN.
POW!
I DARE THEE, LOKI-- I DARE THEE, THIS ONCE, TO MEET ME IN COMBAT UNADORNED!
IN THE NAME OF THE BROTHERHOOD WE ONCE SHARED--
--I COMMAND THEE TO FIGHT-- WITHOUT SPELL OR WEAPON--
--OR DECLARE THYSELF A COWARD FOR ALL TO HEAR-- NOW, AND EVERMORE!
VERY WELL, BROTHER MINE...
I'LL FIGHT.
AND SOON, ALMOST TOO SOON IT SEEMS TO SOME--THE FINAL BATTLE BEGINS:
AS YOU TOLD ME, THOR-- WHEN YOU SET DOWN YOUR HAMMER, YOU WILL HAVE SIXTY SECONDS BEFORE YOU REVERT TO YOUR HUMAN FORM.
SIXTY SECONDS TO WIN FOR US ALL--
OR TO LOSE.
THOSE SIXTY SECONDS BEGIN--
NOW!
THE FIRST BLOW IS MINE, DEAR BROTHER!
AND I SWEAR TO THEE--SO ALSO WILL BE THE LAST!
THAKK!

TIME: FIFTY-SEVEN SECONDS.
LOKI'S VOICE-- IT REVERTS TO ITS FORMER TONE!
FIFTY-FOUR.
CAN IT BE-- HE IS LOSING THE POWER HE GAINED FROM DORMAMMU?
FIFTY.
AYE! HE IS-- AND THOR MAY YET WIN THIS DAY!
FORTY-SIX.
FORTY-ONE.
SPOW!
THIRTY-NINE.
THIRTY-FOUR.
THIRTY.
TWENTY-SIX.
AND THE FIGHT-- GOES ON.
TWENTY.
EIGHTEEN.
THIRTEEN.
KRUMP!


TEN.
NINE.
EIGHT.
SEVEN.
BROTHER--I WILL REMEMBER THIS DAY THROUGHOUT ETERNITY--!
"THE DAY LOKI TRIUMPHED--"
SIX.
--FOR ALL TIMMMM-EEEEEE-EEEEEYAH!
KRABLAM!
TWO.
ALL AT ONCE--IT'S OVER. THE GOD OF MISCHIEF CRUMPLES, AND THE SPELL WITH WHICH HE HELD THE ASGARDIAN ARMY IN THRALL--
--FADES.
YET, EVEN IN THIS MOMENT OF VICTORY-- THE VICTOR FEELS NO TRIUMPH.
HAIL, THOR! THE SON OF ODIN!
THE ARMIES ROAR THEIR CRY OF APPROVAL--BUT ONLY FIRELORD SEES THAT THE CRY GOES UNNOTICED--
--AND THAT OF ALL THOSE PRESENT, ONLY ONE MAN SHEDS A TEAR FOR HIS FALLEN BROTHER.
THE BROTHER OF THE GOD OF THUNDER... THOR.
NEXT ISSUE:
THE STARTLING CONCLUSION TO SIF'S QUEST TO SAVE JANE FOSTER, IN A STORY TITLED:
WHO LURKS WITHIN...THE LABYRINTH?

THOR
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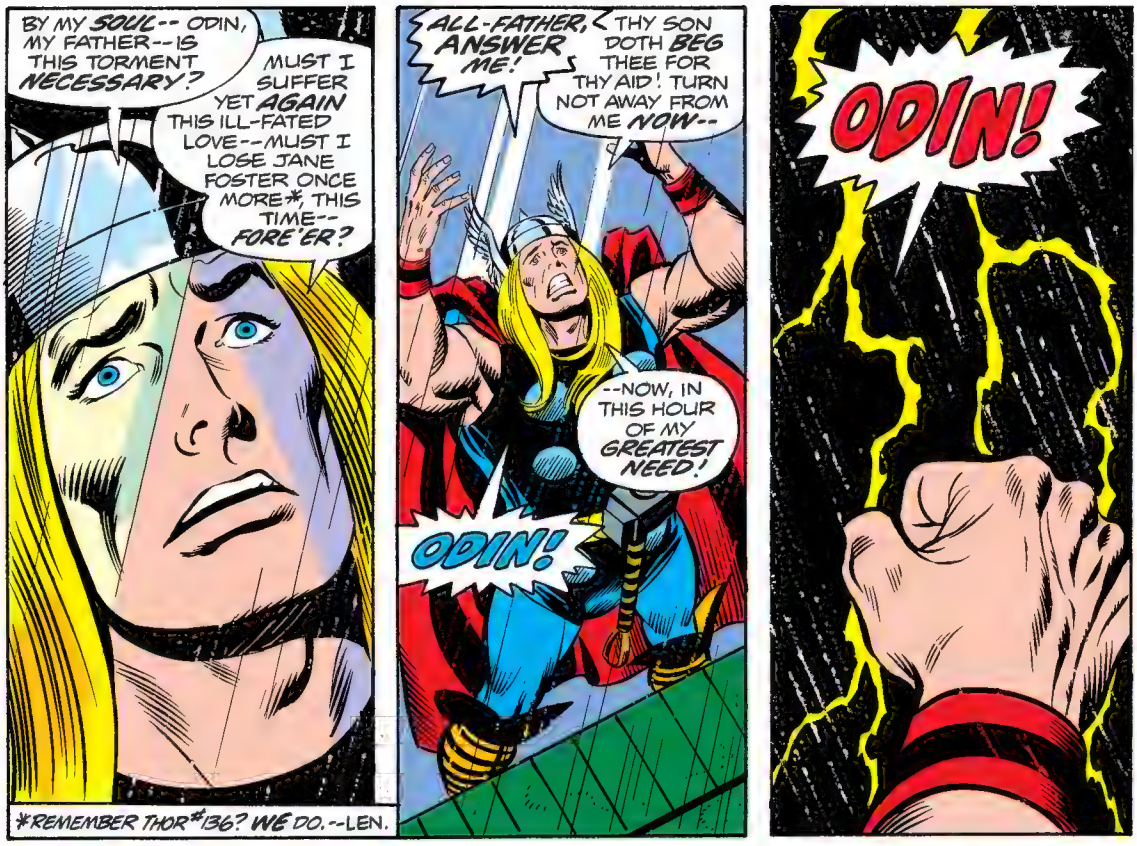
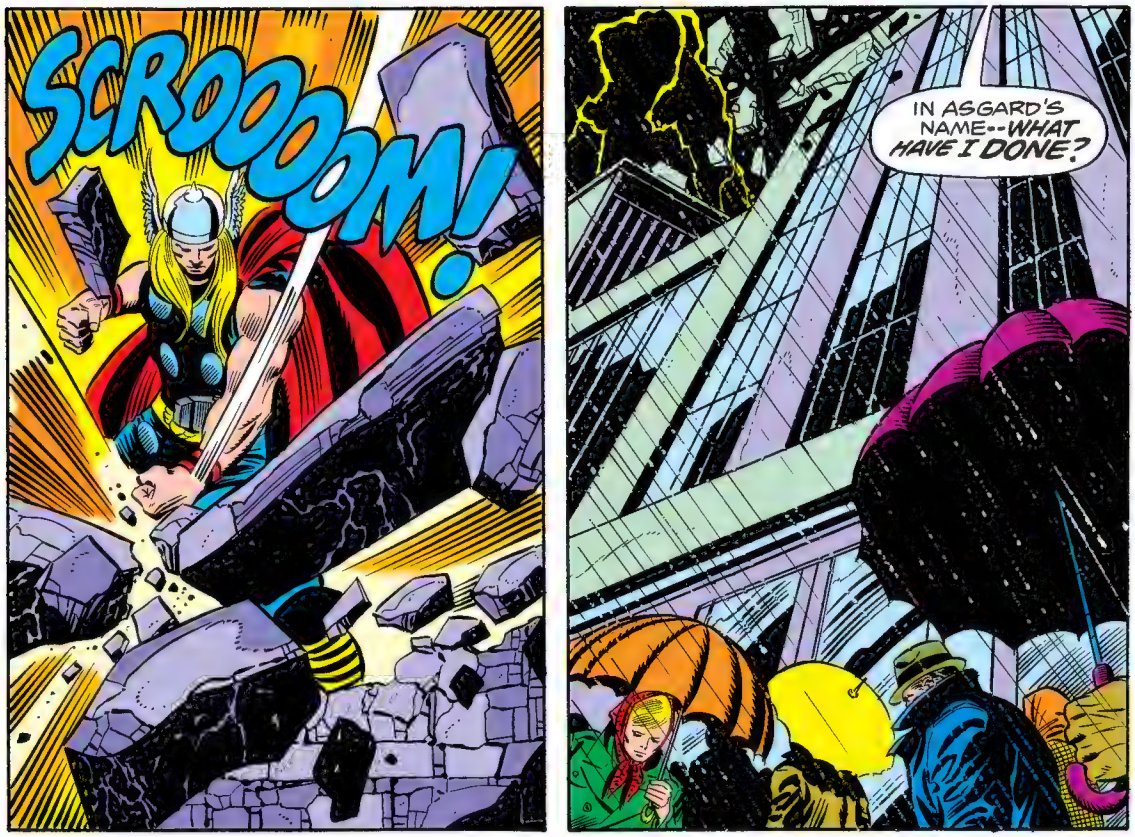
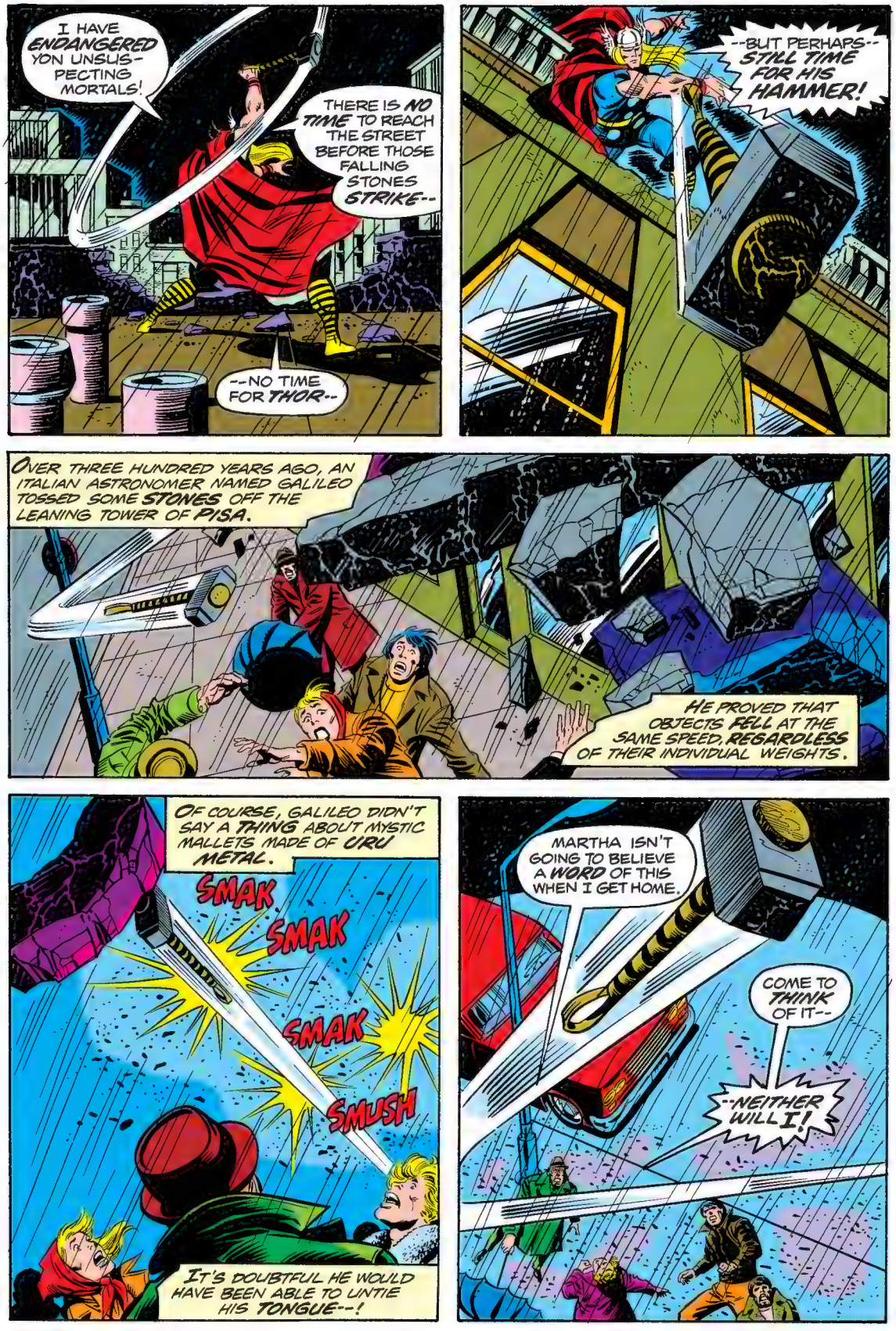
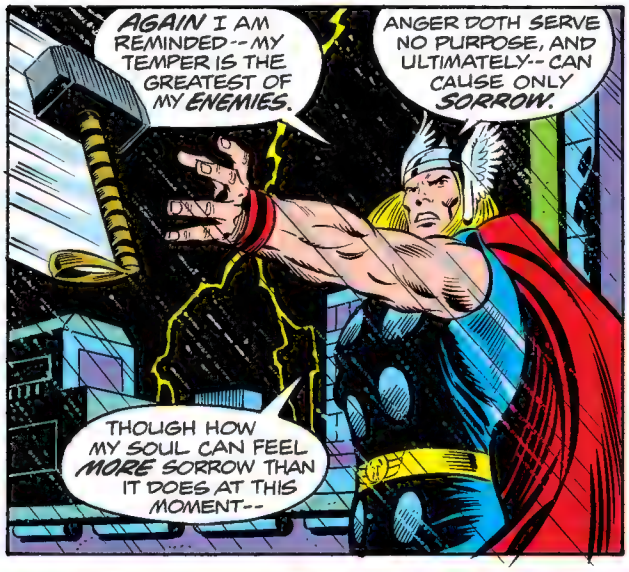
THE MIGHTY
THOR
SURRENDER, THUNDER GOD--OR YOU WILL FALL LIKE YOUR COMRADE HERCULES!
EVEN A GOD MAY NOT LONG STAND AGAINST THE RUNESTAFF OF KAMO THARN!
THE LURKER IN THE LABYRINTH!

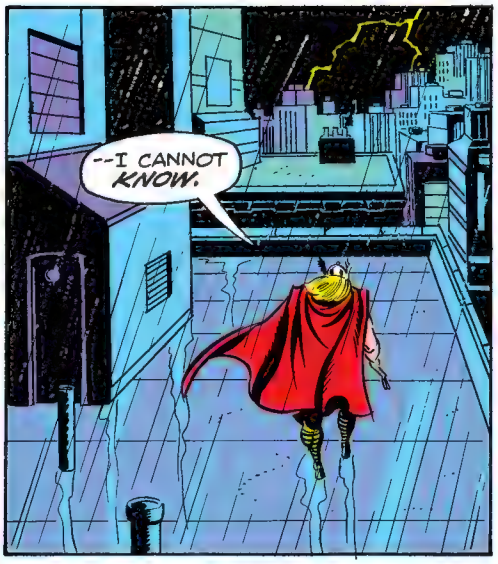
Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE MIGHTY THOR!™
GERRY CONWAY / AUTHOR
JOHN BUSCEMA & JOE SINNOTT / ARTISTS
JOHN COSTANZA, letterer / PETRA GOLDBERG, colorist
LEN WEIN / EDITOR
WHO LURKS BEYOND THE LABYRINTH!
'TIS ALMOST TOO MUCH FOR MY SOUL TO BEAR!
THAT I--THE GOD OF THUNDER--SHOULD BE SO HELPLESS TO SAVE THE WOMAN I LOVE!
INDEED, 'TIS A JEST OF INFINITE IRONY--A JOKE OF TRULY COSMIC SCOPE.
Featuring: THE MARAUDING MENACE OF THE ABSORBING MAN!
CHAPTER ONE: A TIME OF WAITING!

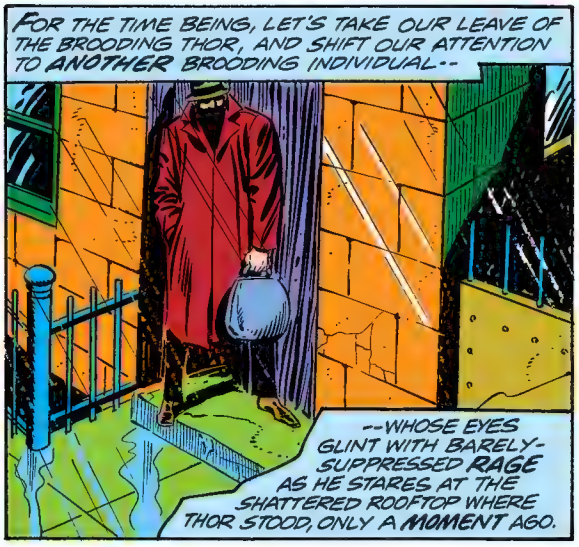

BY MY SOUL-- ODIN, MY FATHER--IS THIS TORMENT NECESSARY?
MUST I SUFFER YET AGAIN THIS ILL-FATED LOVE--MUST I LOSE JANE FOSTER ONCE MORE*, THIS TIME-- FORE'ER?
*REMEMBER THOR #136? WE DO.--LEN.
ALL-FATHER, ANSWER ME!
THY SON DOTH BEG THEE FOR THY AID! TURN NOT AWAY FROM ME NOW--
--NOW, IN THIS HOUR OF MY GREATEST NEED!
ODIN!
ODIN!


SCROOOOM!
IN ASGARD'S NAME--WHAT HAVE I DONE?

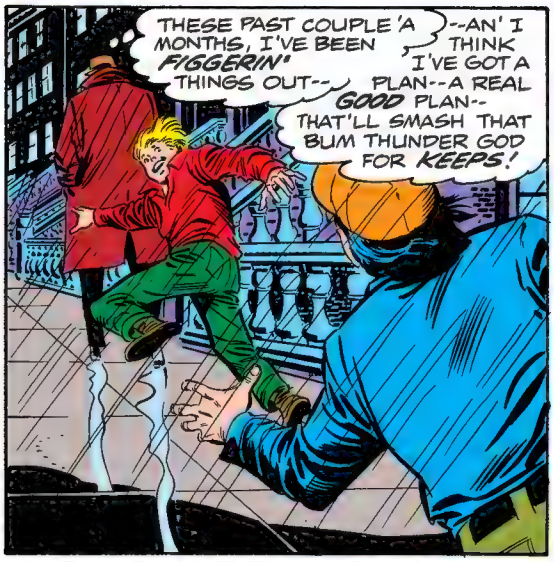

I HAVE ENDANGERED YON UNSUSPECTING MORTALS!
THERE IS NO TIME TO REACH THE STREET BEFORE THOSE FALLING STONES STRIKE--
--NO TIME FOR THOR--
--BUT PERHAPS-- STILL TIME FOR HIS HAMMER!
OVER THREE HUNDRED YEARS AGO, AN ITALIAN ASTRONOMER NAMED GALILEO TOSSED SOME STONES OFF THE LEANING TOWER OF PISA.
HE PROVED THAT OBJECTS FELL AT THE SAME SPEED, REGARDLESS OF THEIR INDIVIDUAL WEIGHTS.
OF COURSE, GALILEO DIDN'T SAY A THING ABOUT MYSTIC MALLETS MADE OF URU METAL.
SMAK
SMAK
SMAK
SMUSH
IT'S DOUBTFUL HE WOULD HAVE BEEN ABLE TO UNTIE HIS TONGUE--!
MARTHA ISN'T GOING TO BELIEVE A WORD OF THIS WHEN I GET HOME.
COME TO THINK OF IT--
--NEITHER WILL I!


AGAIN I AM REMINDED--MY TEMPER IS THE GREATEST OF MY ENEMIES.
ANGER DOTH SERVE NO PURPOSE, AND ULTIMATELY--CAN CAUSE ONLY SORROW.
THOUGH HOW MY SOUL CAN FEEL MORE SORROW THAN IT DOES AT THIS MOMENT--


--I CANNOT KNOW.


FOR THE TIME BEING, LET'S TAKE OUR LEAVE OF THE BROODING THOR, AND SHIFT OUR ATTENTION TO ANOTHER BROODING INDIVIDUAL--
--WHOSE EYES GLINT WITH BARELY-SUPPRESSED RAGE AS HE STARES AT THE SHATTERED ROOFTOP WHERE THOR STOOD, ONLY A MOMENT AGO.

BLASTED RAIN! IF IT WASN'T FOR ALL THIS WATER, I'D ATTACK THAT CREEP RIGHT NOW!
YEAH--IF IT WASN'T FOR THE CRUMMY RAIN.
THAT'S HOW HE BEAT ME LAST TIME--AN' I AIN'T GONNA LET HIM DO IT AGAIN.

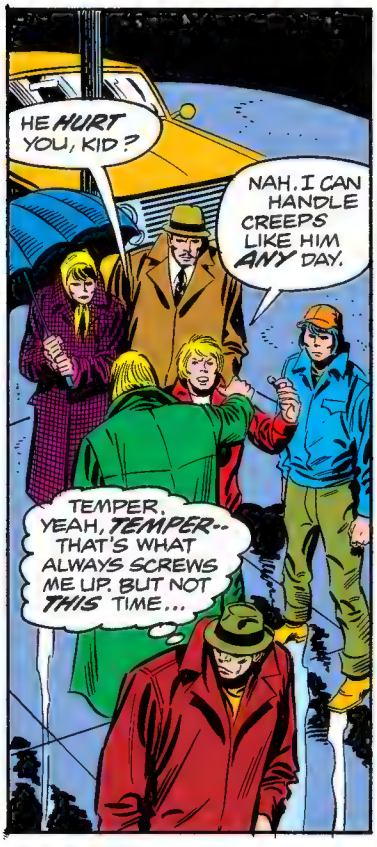

THESE PAST COUPLE 'A MONTHS, I'VE BEEN FIGGERIN' THINGS OUT--
--AN' I THINK I'VE GOT A PLAN--A REAL GOOD PLAN--THAT'LL SMASH THAT BUM THUNDER GOD FOR KEEPS!

ALL I'VE GOTTA DO IS BIDE MY TIME, AND THEN--
YOU CAN'T CATCH ME, DENNY--!
I'M TOO FAST FOR--
:OUUUFFF!:

SORRY, MISTER. I-- YEEOWW!
YA LITTLE PUNK! I OUGHTA--

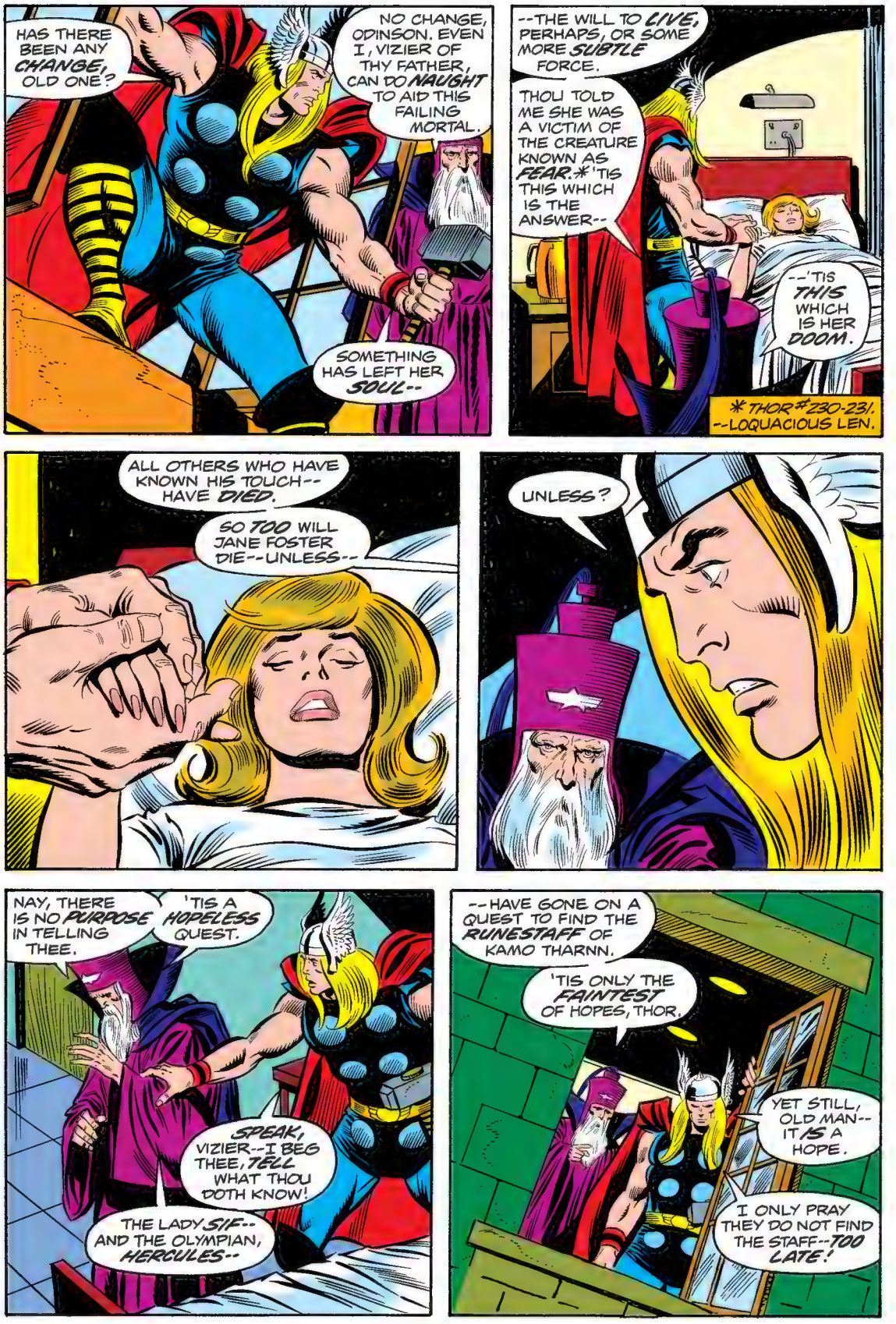
HEY, BUSTER-- WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?
PUT THAT KID DOWN! YOU WANT A FAT LIP OR SUMTHIN'?
WHY DON'T YOU PICK ON SOMEBODY YOUR OWN SIZE?

GREAT. ALL I NEED NOW IS FOR A COP TO SHOW UP.
GOTTA WATCH MY TEMPER.
HEH. HEH. NICE KID-- SORRY I MUSSED YOU UP. JUST IN FUN Y'KNOW.

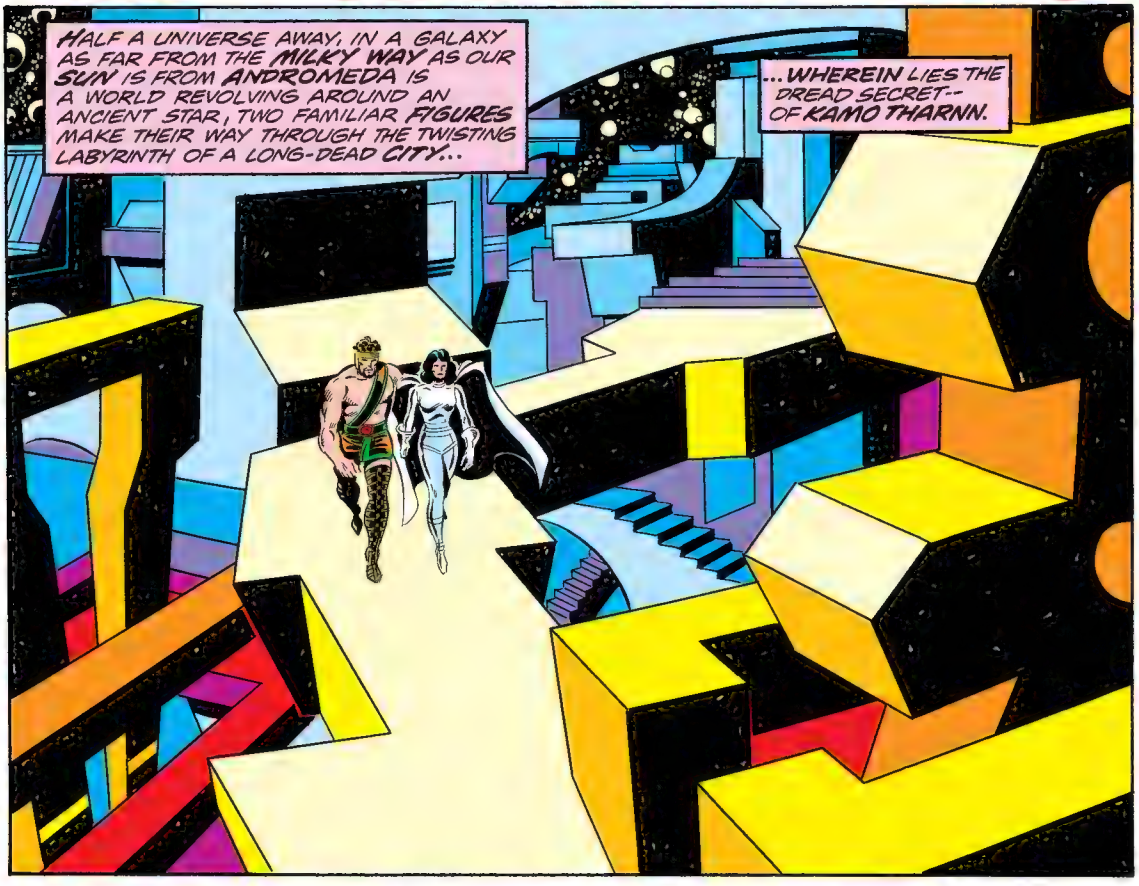

HE HURT YOU, KID?
NAH. I CAN HANDLE CREEPS LIKE HIM ANY DAY.
TEMPER. YEAH, TEMPER-- THAT'S WHAT ALWAYS SCREWS ME UP. BUT NOT THIS TIME...

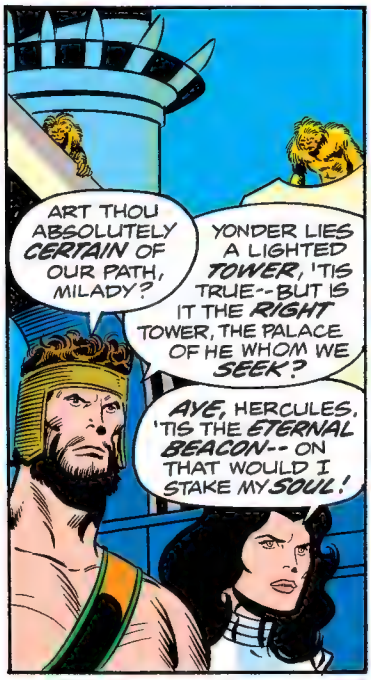
THIS TIME I'M GONNA DO IT RIGHT.
THIS TIME-- THE ABSORBING MAN IS GONNA BE THE WINNER-- AND THE LOSER IS GONNA BE-- THOR!

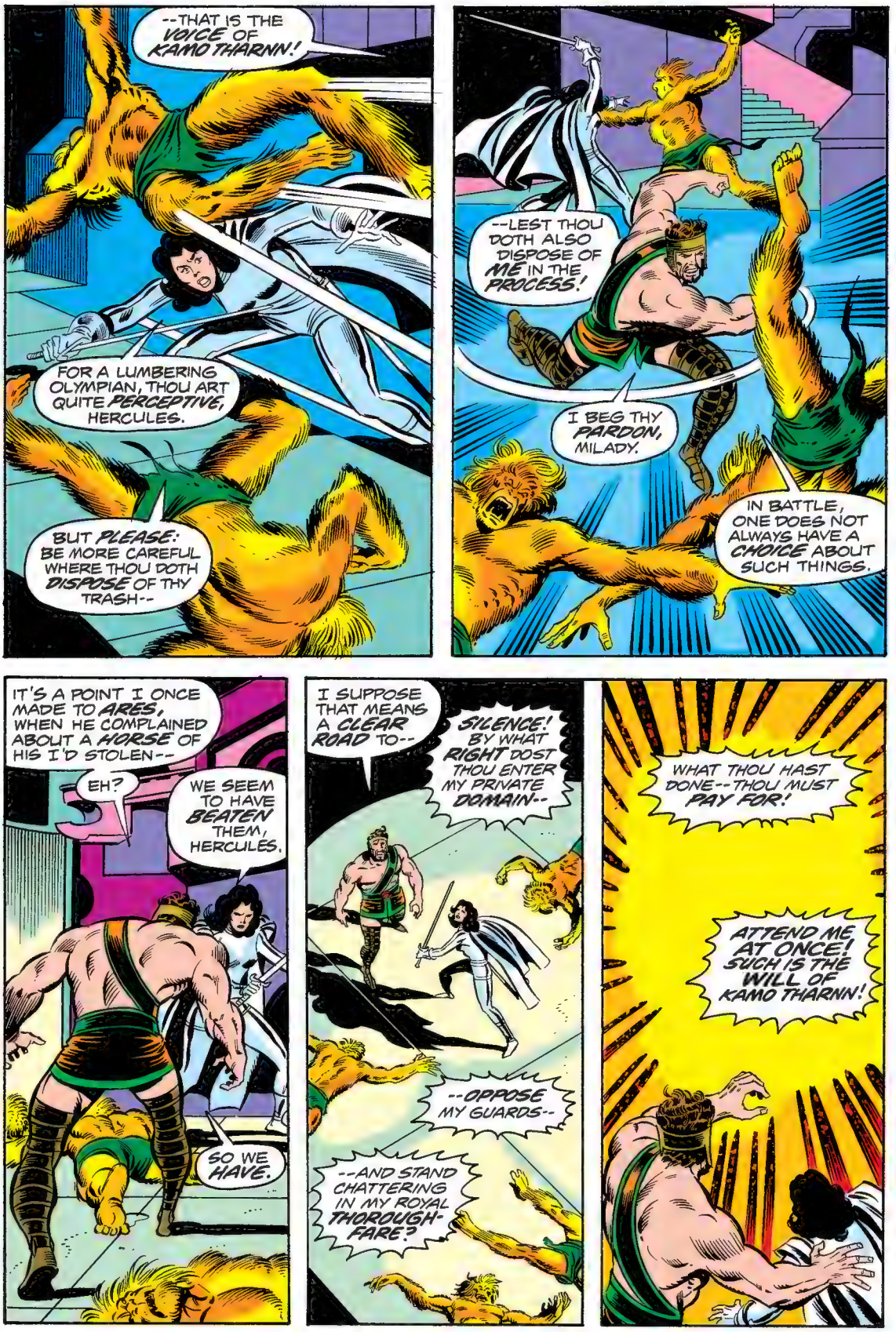
SURE, WE KNOW THERE ARE A LOT OF UNANSWERED QUESTIONS FLOATING AROUND-- LIKE HOW THE ABSORBING MAN ESCAPED DESTRUCTION * AFTER HIS LAST BATTLE WITH THOR--
--BUT RIGHT NOW, WE'VE MORE IMPORTANT THINGS TO THINK ABOUT. NAMELY:
JANE!
* BACK IN THOR # 207. SEE? WE REMEMBER THAT ONE, TOO! --LEN.

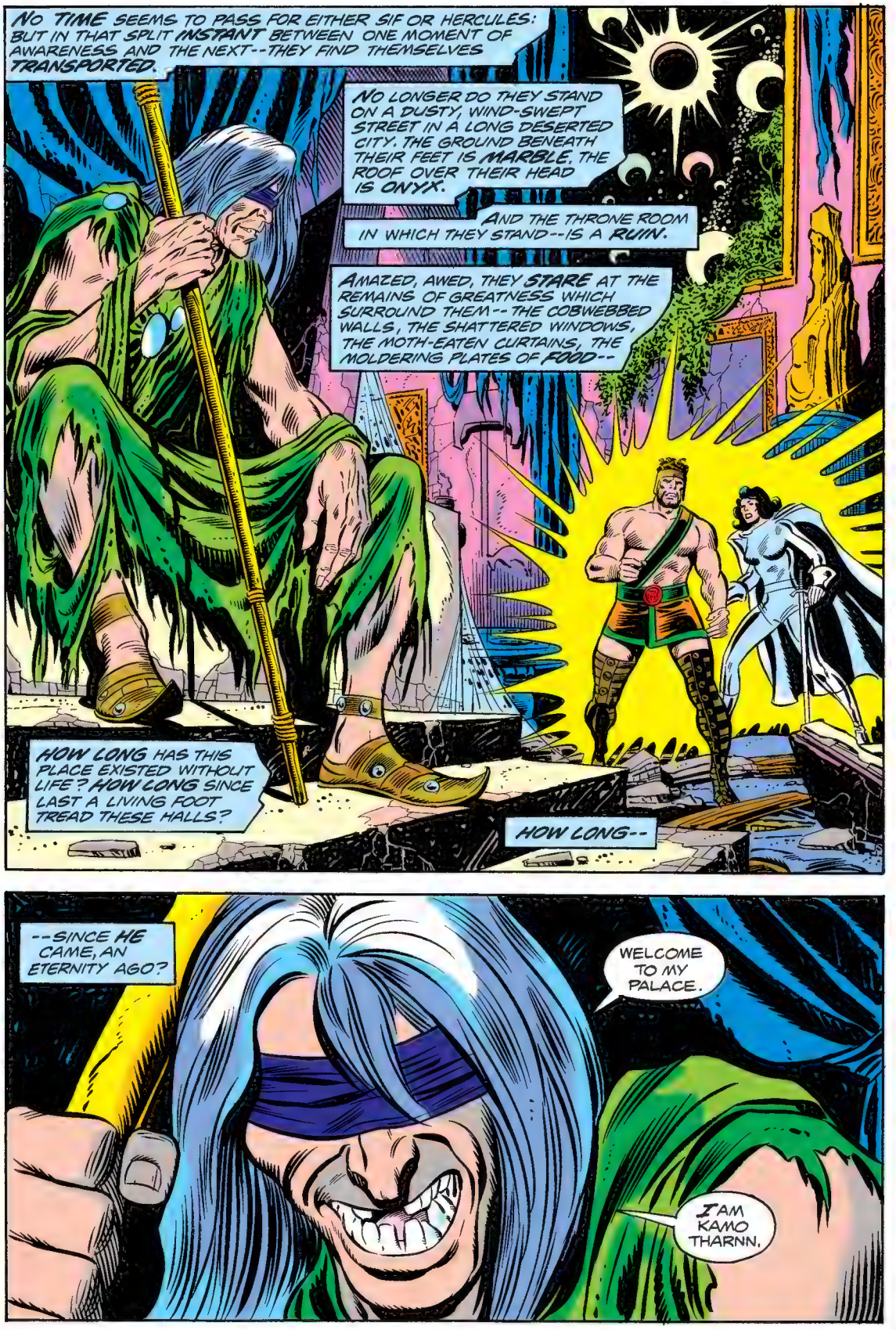

HAS THERE BEEN ANY CHANGE, OLD ONE?
NO CHANGE, ODINSON. EVEN I, VIZIER OF THY FATHER, CAN DO NAUGHT TO AID THIS FAILING MORTAL.
SOMETHING HAS LEFT HER SOUL--
--THE WILL TO LIVE, PERHAPS, OR SOME MORE SUBTLE FORCE.
THOU TOLD ME SHE WAS A VICTIM OF THE CREATURE KNOWN AS FEAR.* 'TIS THIS WHICH IS THE ANSWER--
--'TIS THIS WHICH IS HER DOOM.
*THOR #230-231. --LOQUACIOUS LEN.
ALL OTHERS WHO HAVE KNOWN HIS TOUCH-- HAVE DIED.
SO TOO WILL JANE FOSTER DIE--UNLESS--
UNLESS?
NAY, THERE IS NO PURPOSE IN TELLING THEE.
'TIS A HOPELESS QUEST.
SPEAK, VIZIER--I BEG THEE, TELL WHAT THOU DOTH KNOW!
THE LADY SIF-- AND THE OLYMPIAN, HERCULES--
--HAVE GONE ON A QUEST TO FIND THE RUNESTAFF OF KAMO THARNN.
'TIS ONLY THE FAINTEST OF HOPES, THOR.
YET STILL, OLD MAN-- IT IS A HOPE.
I ONLY PRAY THEY DO NOT FIND THE STAFF--TOO LATE!

CHAPTER TWO: THE MAN BEHIND THE MAZE!

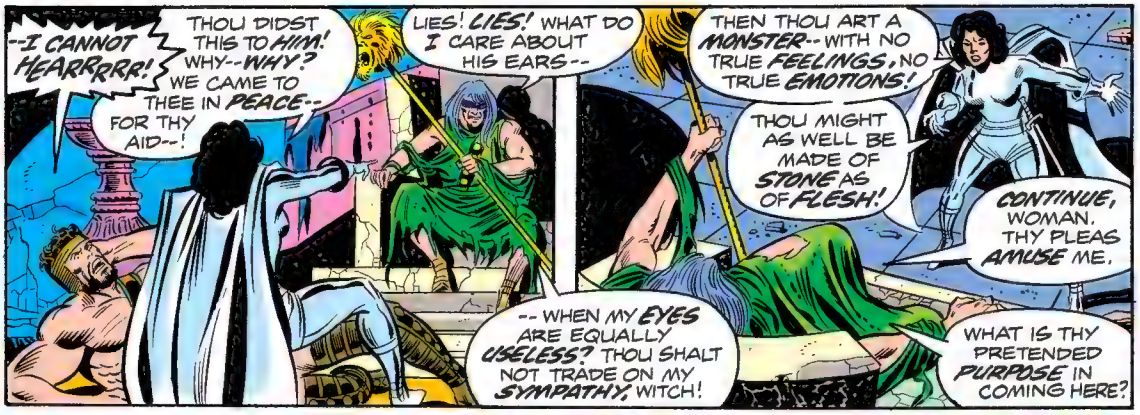

HALF A UNIVERSE AWAY, IN A GALAXY AS FAR FROM THE MILKY WAY AS OUR SUN IS FROM ANDROMEDA IS A WORLD REVOLVING AROUND AN ANCIENT STAR, TWO FAMILIAR FIGURES MAKE THEIR WAY THROUGH THE TWISTING LABYRINTH OF A LONG-DEAD CITY...
...WHEREIN LIES THE DREAD SECRET-- OF KAMO THARNN.


ART THOU ABSOLUTELY CERTAIN OF OUR PATH, MILADY?
YONDER LIES A LIGHTED TOWER, 'TIS TRUE--BUT IS IT THE RIGHT TOWER, THE PALACE OF HE WHOM WE SEEK?
AYE, HERCULES, 'TIS THE ETERNAL BEACON-- ON THAT WOULD I STAKE MY SOUL!


--THAT IS THE VOICE OF KAMO THARNN!
FOR A LUMBERING OLYMPIAN, THOU ART QUITE PERCEPTIVE, HERCULES.
BUT PLEASE: BE MORE CAREFUL WHERE THOU DOTH DISPOSE OF THY TRASH--
--LEST THOU DOTH ALSO DISPOSE OF ME IN THE PROCESS!
I BEG THY PARDON, MILADY.
IN BATTLE, ONE DOES NOT ALWAYS HAVE A CHOICE ABOUT SUCH THINGS.
IT'S A POINT I ONCE MADE TO ARES, WHEN HE COMPLAINED ABOUT A HORSE OF HIS I'D STOLEN--
EH?
WE SEEM TO HAVE BEATEN THEM, HERCULES.
SO WE HAVE.
I SUPPOSE THAT MEANS A CLEAR ROAD TO--
SILENCE! BY WHAT RIGHT DOST THOU ENTER MY PRIVATE DOMAIN--
--OPPOSE MY GUARDS--
--AND STAND CHATTERING IN MY ROYAL THOROUGH-FARE?
WHAT THOU HAST DONE--THOU MUST PAY FOR!
ATTEND ME AT ONCE! SUCH IS THE WILL OF KAMO THARNN!

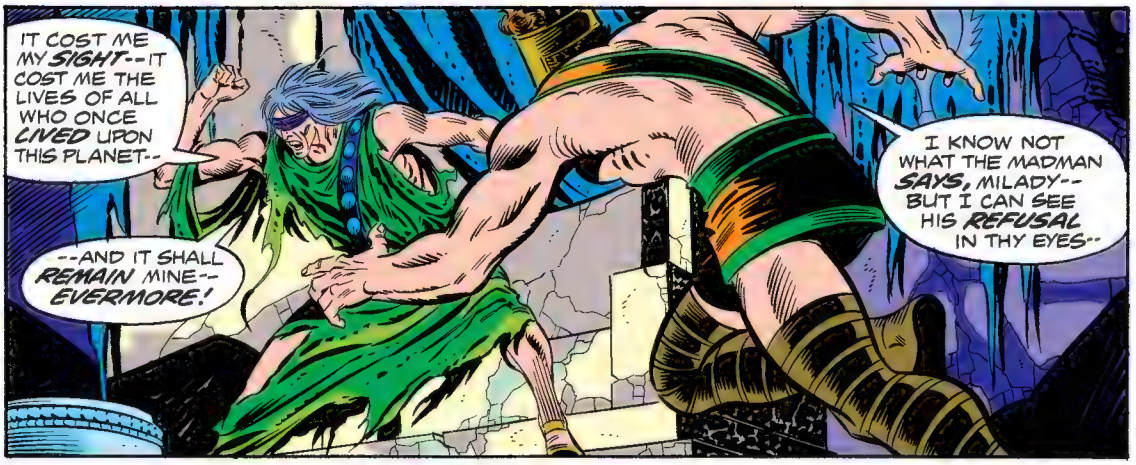

NO TIME SEEMS TO PASS FOR EITHER SIF OR HERCULES: BUT IN THAT SPLIT INSTANT BETWEEN ONE MOMENT OF AWARENESS AND THE NEXT--THEY FIND THEMSELVES TRANSPORTED.
NO LONGER DO THEY STAND ON A DUSTY, WIND-SWEPT STREET IN A LONG DESERTED CITY. THE GROUND BENEATH THEIR FEET IS MARBLE. THE ROOF OVER THEIR HEAD IS ONYX.
AND THE THRONE ROOM IN WHICH THEY STAND--IS A RUIN.
AMAZED, AWED, THEY STARE AT THE REMAINS OF GREATNESS WHICH SURROUND THEM--THE COBWEBBED WALLS, THE SHATTERED WINDOWS, THE MOTH-EATEN CURTAINS, THE MOLDERING PLATES OF FOOD--
HOW LONG HAS THIS PLACE EXISTED WITHOUT LIFE? HOW LONG SINCE LAST A LIVING FOOT TREAD THESE HALLS?
HOW LONG--
--SINCE HE CAME, AN ETERNITY AGO?
WELCOME TO MY PALACE.
I AM KAMO THARNN.

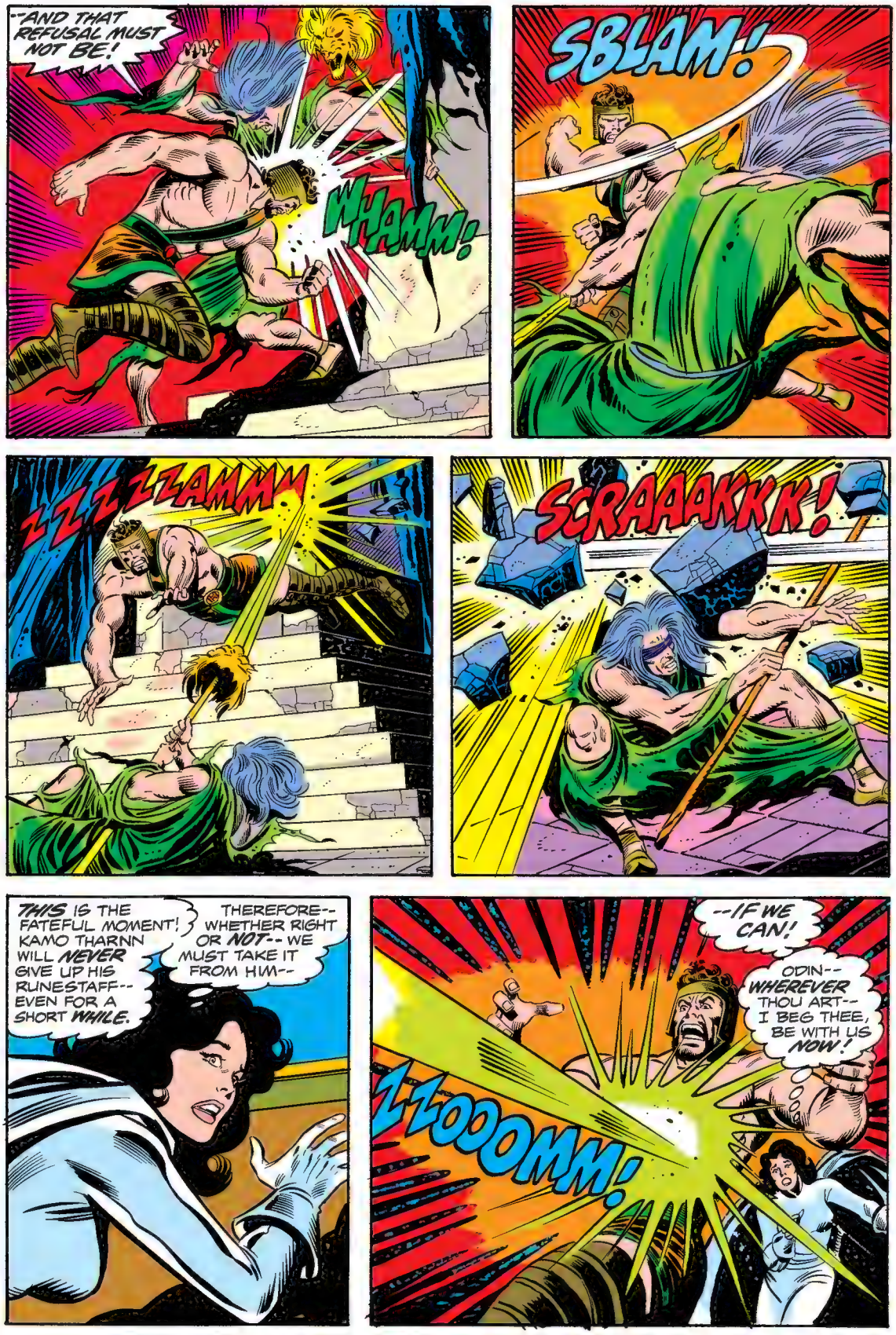
AND I AM HERCULES-- GOD OF OLYMPUS, AND NO MAN'S PAWN!
HERCULES-- NO--!
THY COMPANION SEEMS WISER THAN THOU, OLYMPIAN.
A PITY HER WARNING FALLS ON DEAF EARS. PERHAPS THOU WOULD PREFER--
ZZZAAAM!
--IF THAT WERE LITERALLY SO!
A FULL SIX SECONDS PASS AS THE EMERALD BEAM PLAYS OVER THE VALIANT OLYMPIAN'S HEAD; THEN, WHEN THE BEAM FADES...
HERCULES-- ART THOU IN PAIN?
MILADY-- DOST THOU SPEAK?
I SEE THY LIPS MOVE-- BUT I CANNOT--
NNNO-OOOOO!


--I CANNOT HEARRRRR!
THOU DIDST THIS TO HIM! WHY--WHY? WE CAME TO THEE IN PEACE-- FOR THY AID--!
LIES! LIES! WHAT DO I CARE ABOUT HIS EARS--
-- WHEN MY EYES ARE EQUALLY USELESS? THOU SHALT NOT TRADE ON MY SYMPATHY, WITCH!
THEN THOU ART A MONSTER--WITH NO TRUE FEELINGS, NO TRUE EMOTIONS!
THOU MIGHT AS WELL BE MADE OF STONE AS OF FLESH!
CONTINUE, WOMAN. THY PLEAS AMUSE ME.
WHAT IS THY PRETENDED PURPOSE IN COMING HERE?

'TIS PERHAPS MORE THAN THOU CANST UNDERSTAND.
HE WHOM I LOVE DOTH LOVE ANOTHER-- AND SHE IS DYING. I WISH TO SAVE HER, IF I CAN--
--BECAUSE I LOVE HIM-- AND IT IS THE LIFE OF HIS BELOVED WHICH HE DOTH WANT, MORE THAN ANY-THING IN THE WORLD!

AND THOU DOTH COME TO ME?
THOU ART WORSE THAN A WITCH-- THOU ART A FOOL!
THAT POWER WHICH I POSSESS IS MINE, FOR MY USE ALONE!

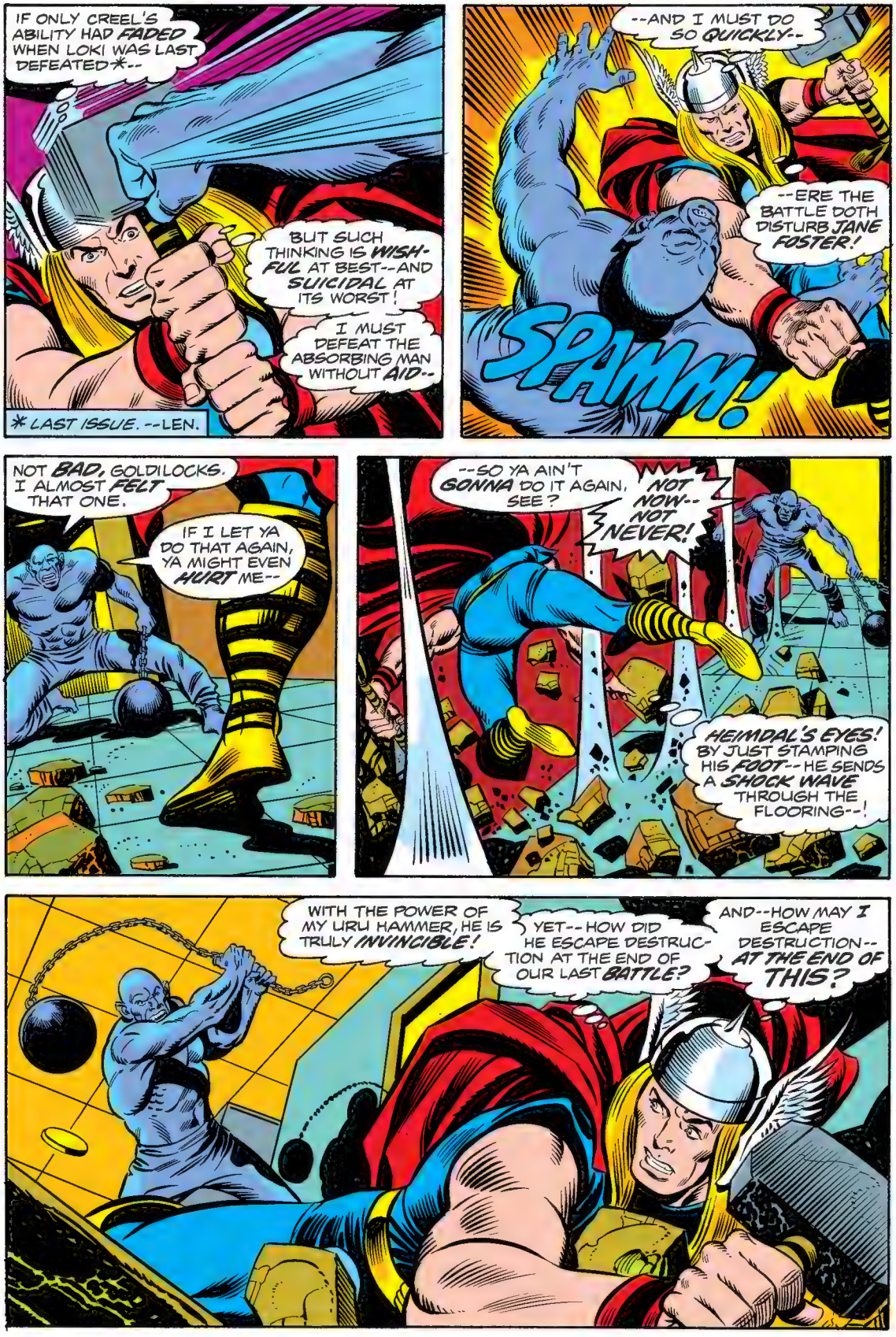

IT COST ME MY SIGHT--IT COST ME THE LIVES OF ALL WHO ONCE LIVED UPON THIS PLANET--
--AND IT SHALL REMAIN MINE-- EVERMORE!
I KNOW NOT WHAT THE MADMAN SAYS, MILADY-- BUT I CAN SEE HIS REFUSAL IN THY EYES--


--AND THAT REFUSAL MUST NOT BE!
WHAMM!
SBLAM!
ZZZZZAMMM
SCRAAAKKK!
THIS IS THE FATEFUL MOMENT! KAMO THARNN WILL NEVER GIVE UP HIS RUNESTAFF-- EVEN FOR A SHORT WHILE.
THEREFORE-- WHETHER RIGHT OR NOT-- WE MUST TAKE IT FROM HIM--
--IF WE CAN!
ODIN-- WHEREVER THOU ART-- I BEG THEE, BE WITH US NOW!
ZZOOOMM!

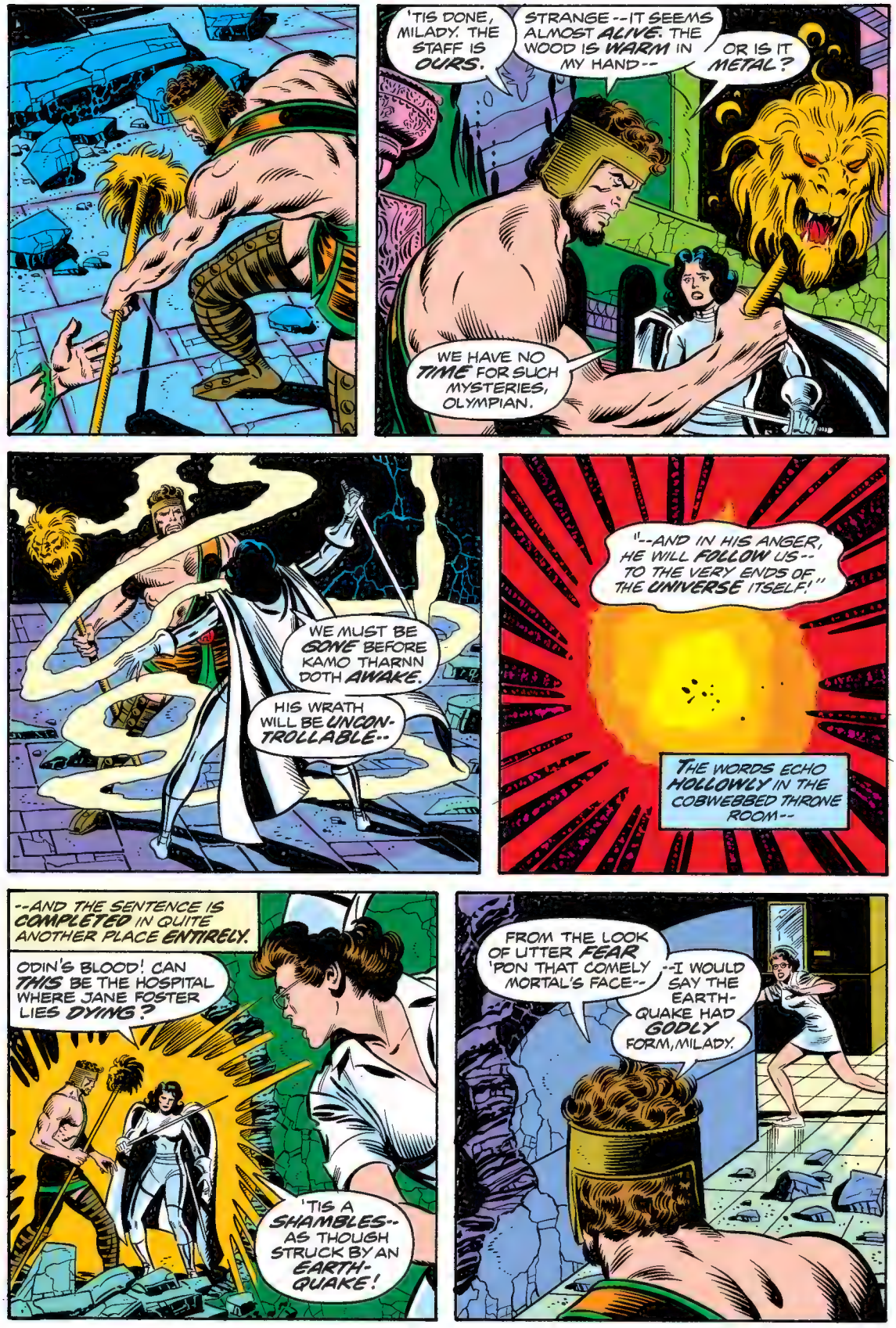
CHAPTER THREE: THE PATHOS and the POWER!

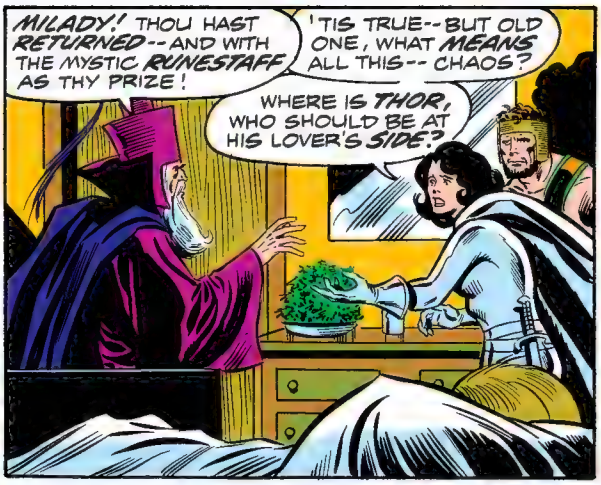
WE MUST LEAVE THE PALACE OF KAMO THARNN FOR NOW, AND RETURN TO EARTH-- AND TO A CERTAIN HOSPITAL ROOM--
--WHERE OTHER EVENTS ARE ALSO REACHING A CLIMAX--
--UNBEKNOWNST TO THE GRIEF-STRICKEN GOD OF THUNDER.
SO FAR, SO GOOD. IF HE JUST KEEPS IGNORING ME--
--I CAN DO WHAT I CAME HERE FOR!
I DID IT! I TOUCHED THOR'S HAMMER--
--AND NOW NOTHING CAN STOP ME!
THE ABSORBING MAN'S GONNA TAKE IT ALL!
IN THE NAME OF VALHALLA-- WHAT--?

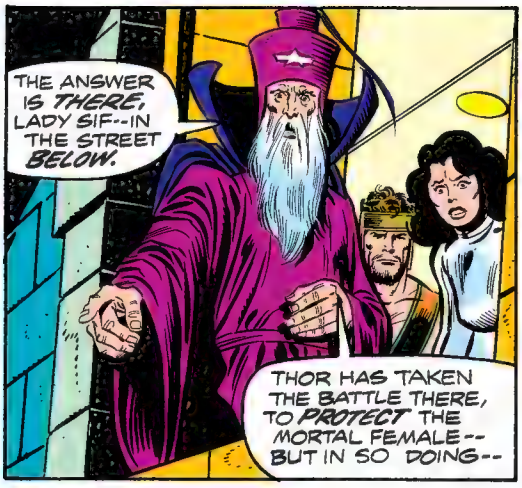
THIS IS WHAT, YA LONG-HAIRED CLOWN!
I'VE BEEN WAITIN' TA RUIN YA FOR A LONG TIME-- AND AFTER ALL THESE MONTHS--
SMAKKO!
BAPOW!
--I'VE FINALLY GOT MY CHANCE!
THOU ART STRONG CRUSHER CREEL-- STRONGER THAN WHEN LAST WE MET!
THAT'S 'CAUSE I'VE ABSORBED THE POWER OF YOUR URU HAMMER, THUNDER GOD.
I THOUGHT ABOUT IT FER A MONTH--
--AND I REALIZED THAT'S WHAT I HADDA DO.
SOON AS I TOUCH MY BALL AND CHAIN-- THEY'LL ABSORB YOUR URU HAMMER'S POWER TOO--!
THEN I'M GONNA TAKE YOU APART-- ONCE AND FOREVER!
BLAMMM!
THE POWER OF CRUSHER CREEL IS LOKI'S DOING* --AND IS AS GREAT A POWER AS MINE--!
*LOKI MAGICALLY TRANSFORMED THE BURLY CONVICT BACK IN THOR #114. --LEN.

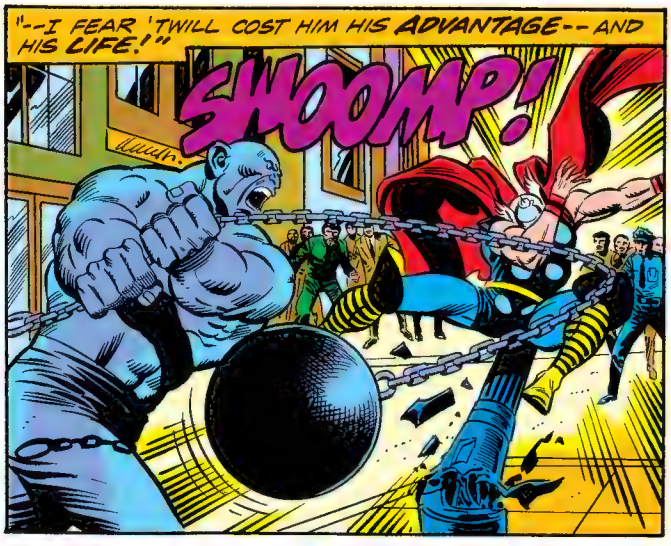

IF ONLY CREEL'S ABILITY HAD FADED WHEN LOKI WAS LAST DEFEATED*--
BUT SUCH THINKING IS WISH-FUL AT BEST--AND SUICIDAL AT ITS WORST!
I MUST DEFEAT THE ABSORBING MAN WITHOUT AID--
*LAST ISSUE. --LEN.
--AND I MUST DO SO QUICKLY--
--ERE THE BATTLE DOTH DISTURB JANE FOSTER!
SPAMM!
NOT BAD, GOLDILOCKS. I ALMOST FELT THAT ONE.
IF I LET YA DO THAT AGAIN, YA MIGHT EVEN HURT ME--
--SO YA AIN'T GONNA DO IT AGAIN, SEE?
NOT NOW-- NOT NEVER!
HEIMDAL'S EYES! BY JUST STAMPING HIS FOOT--HE SENDS A SHOCK WAVE THROUGH THE FLOORING--!
WITH THE POWER OF MY URU HAMMER, HE IS TRULY INVINCIBLE!
YET--HOW DID HE ESCAPE DESTRUC-TION AT THE END OF OUR LAST BATTLE?
AND--HOW MAY I ESCAPE DESTRUCTION-- AT THE END OF THIS?

A GOOD QUESTION, THOR. UNFORTUNATELY, YOU'RE NOT THE ONLY GOD WORRIED ABOUT ESCAPING DESTRUCTION RIGHT NOW!
IN THE PLACE OF KAMO THARNN, SIF IS MORE THAN A LITTLE CONCERNED ABOUT HERCULES--!
MONSTER! THE RAYS FROM THY STAFF ARE DESTROYING HIM!
IN THE NAME OF THY FORMER NOBILITY-- STOP!
NAY, MILADY--I CAN HEAR THEE NOW--DO NOT BESEECH YON DEMON.
THOUGH FALLEN-- HERCULES STILL DOTH LIVE--
--AND--BY--MY-- SOUL--AS LONG AS LIFE--EXISTS WITHIN ME--
I--WILL-- NOT--BEG--
I--
--WILL--
--NOT--
--BEG!
BRAABOOM!
UNNNNHHHH!

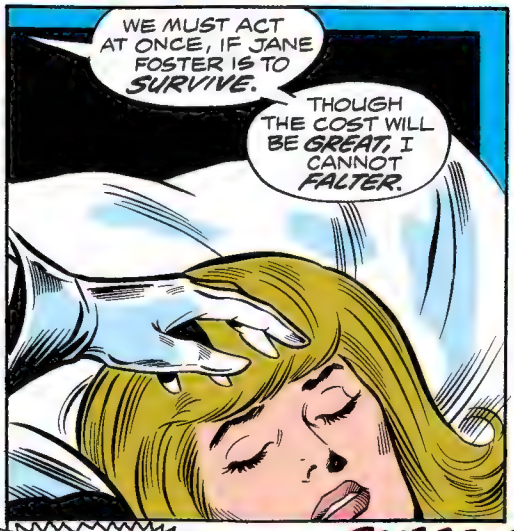

'TIS DONE, MILADY. THE STAFF IS OURS.
STRANGE--IT SEEMS ALMOST ALIVE. THE WOOD IS WARM IN MY HAND--
OR IS IT METAL?
WE HAVE NO TIME FOR SUCH MYSTERIES, OLYMPIAN.
WE MUST BE GONE BEFORE KAMO THARNN DOTH AWAKE.
HIS WRATH WILL BE UNCONTROLLABLE--
"--AND IN HIS ANGER, HE WILL FOLLOW US-- TO THE VERY ENDS OF THE UNIVERSE ITSELF!"
THE WORDS ECHO HOLLOWLY IN THE COBWEBBED THRONE ROOM--
--AND THE SENTENCE IS COMPLETED IN QUITE ANOTHER PLACE ENTIRELY.
ODIN'S BLOOD! CAN THIS BE THE HOSPITAL WHERE JANE FOSTER LIES DYING?
'TIS A SHAMBLES-- AS THOUGH STRUCK BY AN EARTHQUAKE!
FROM THE LOOK OF UTTER FEAR 'PON THAT COMELY MORTAL'S FACE--
--I WOULD SAY THE EARTHQUAKE HAD GODLY FORM, MILADY.


MILADY! THOU HAST RETURNED--AND WITH THE MYSTIC RUNESTAFF AS THY PRIZE!
'TIS TRUE--BUT OLD ONE, WHAT MEANS ALL THIS--CHAOS?
WHERE IS THOR, WHO SHOULD BE AT HIS LOVER'S SIDE?


THE ANSWER IS THERE, LADY SIF--IN THE STREET BELOW.
THOR HAS TAKEN THE BATTLE THERE, TO PROTECT THE MORTAL FEMALE--BUT IN SO DOING--



THIS MUST NOT BE! IF THOR DOTH NEED AID, THEN HE SHALL--
NAY, HERCULES, THERE IS NO TIME!
AT ANY MOMENT, KAMO THARNN MAY TRACE OUR PATH TO EARTH--!

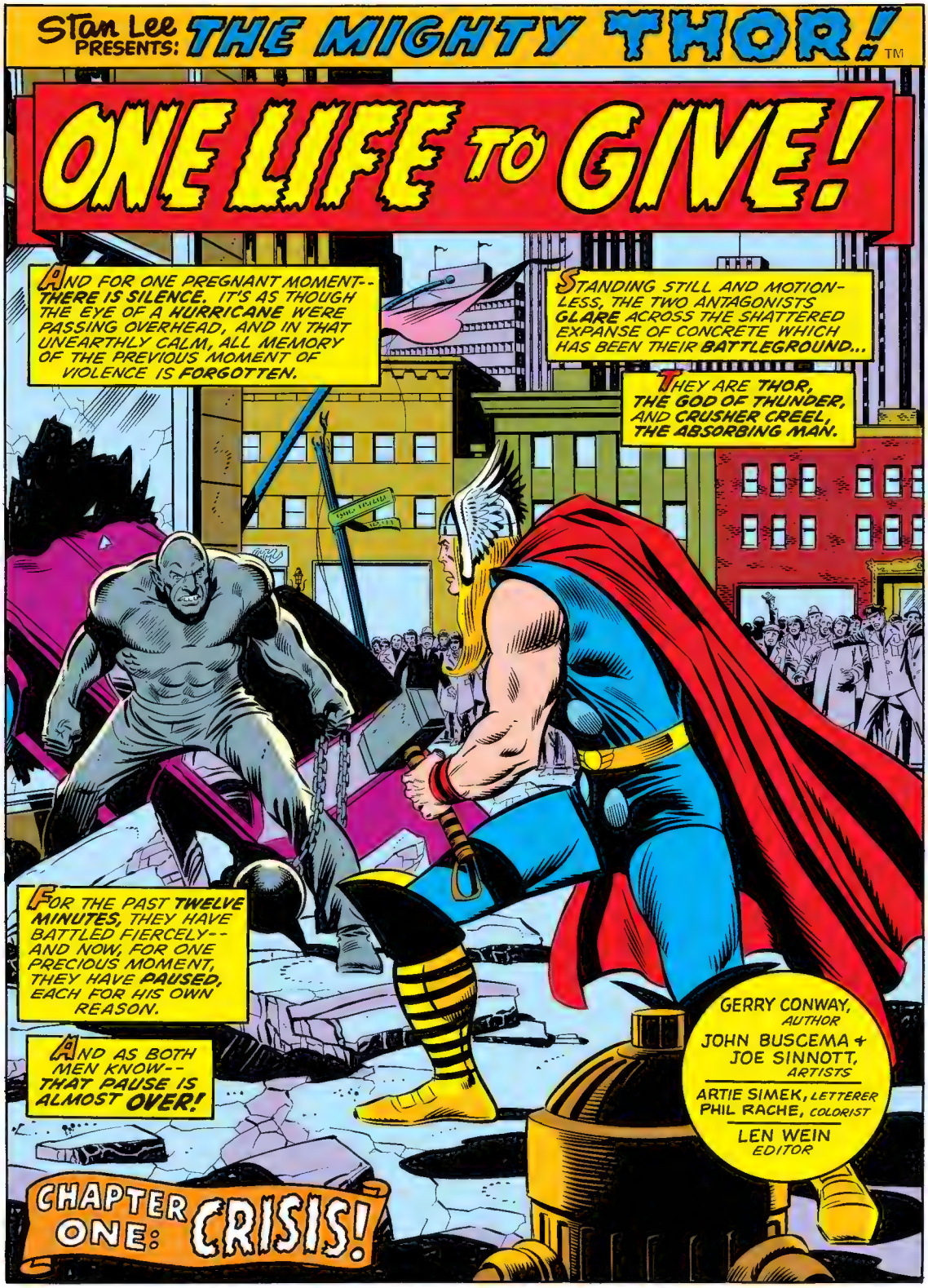


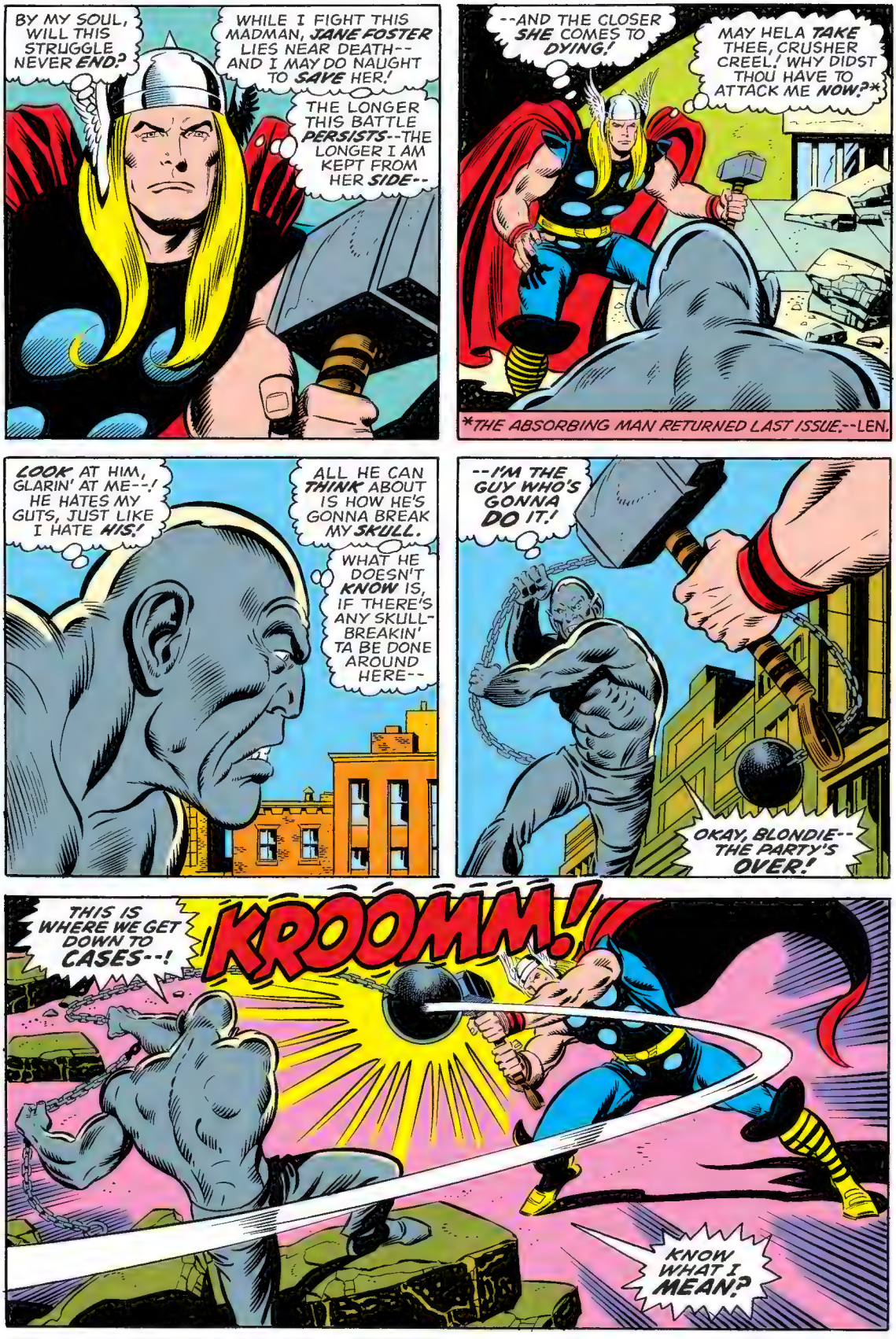
NEXT ISSUE:

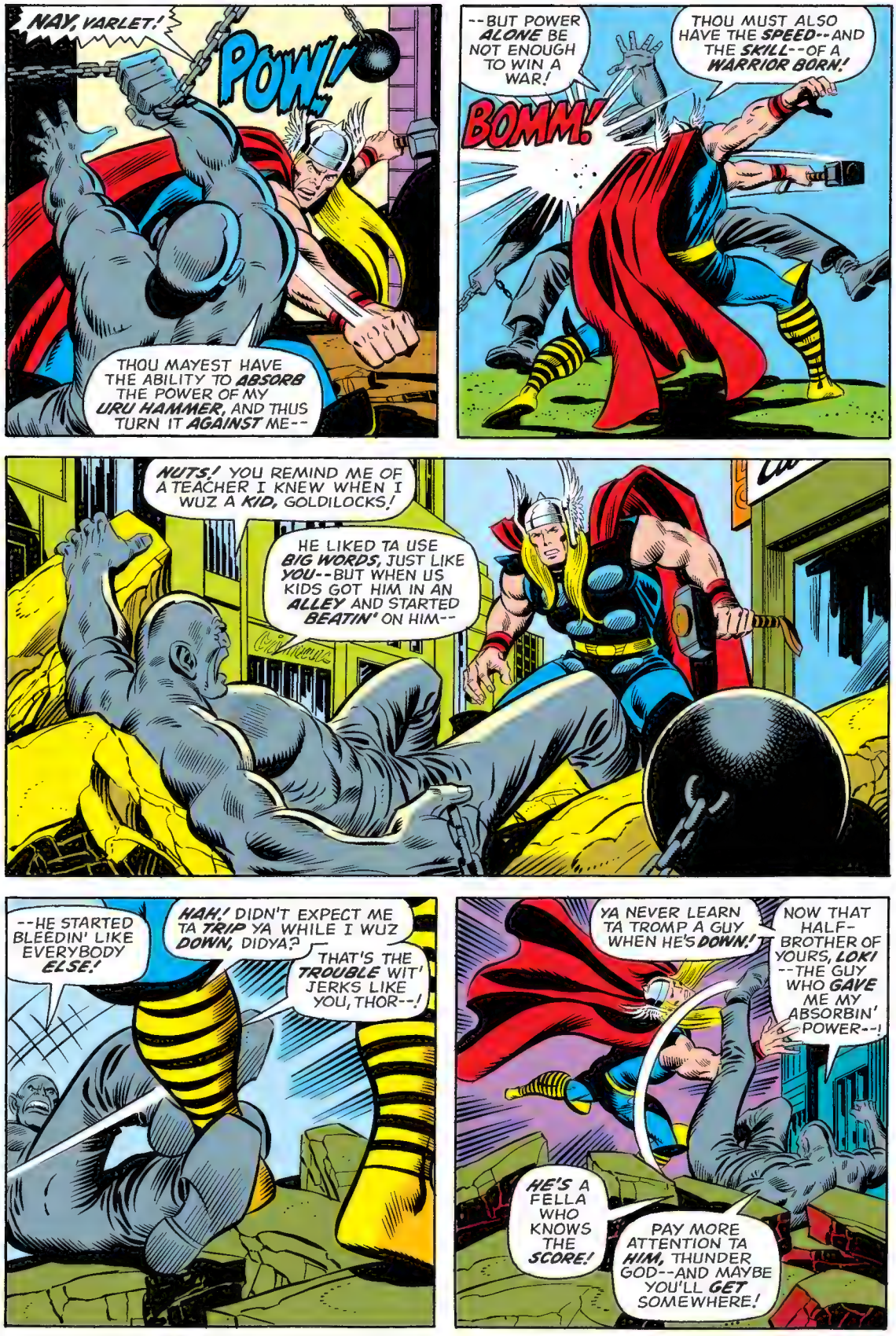
THE FINAL FATE OF JANE FOSTER!

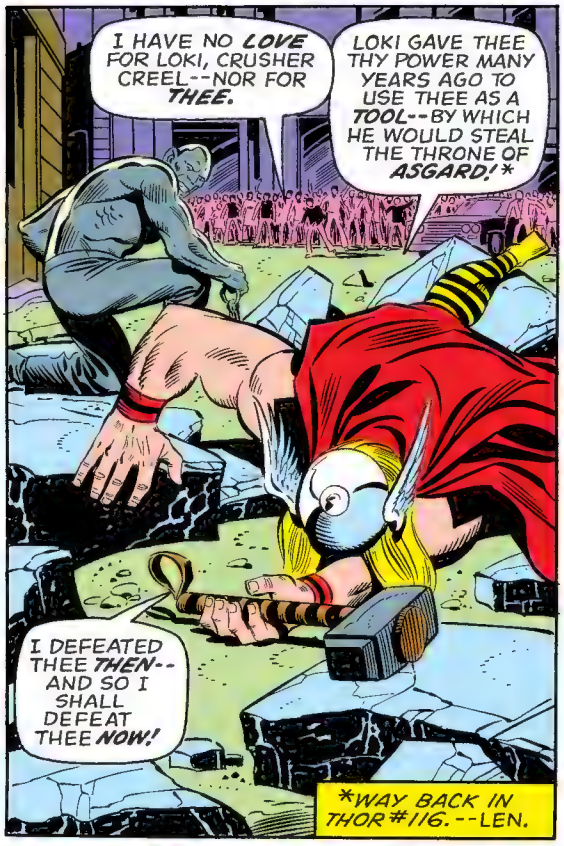
IT'S THE ONE YOU'VE BEEN WAITING FOR, HERO--DON'T MISS IT!

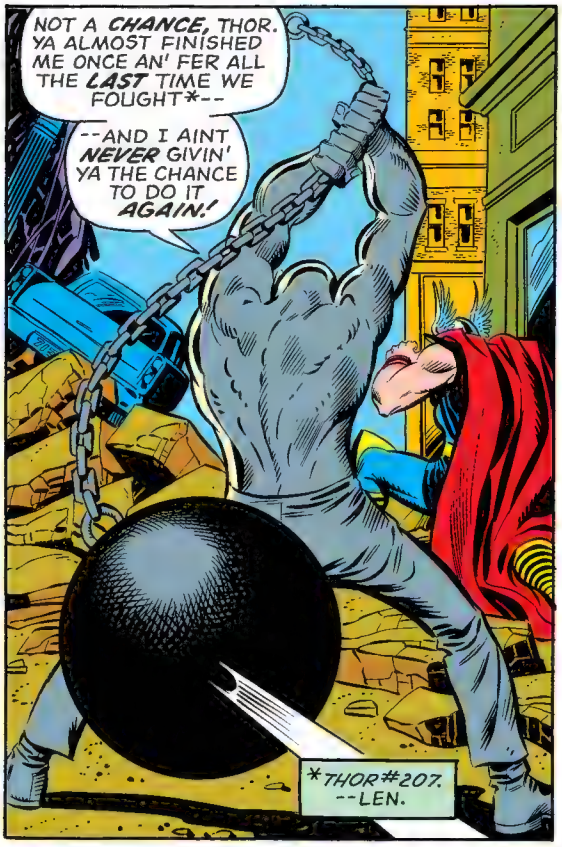
THOR
MARVEL COMICS GROUP™
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
25¢
236
JUNE
02450
THE MIGHTY
THOR
THE ABSORBING MAN IS BACK IN TOWN, THUNDER GOD--
--AND NEW YORK AIN'T BIG ENOUGH FOR BOTH OF US!
ONE LIFE TO GIVE!


Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE MIGHTY THOR! TM
ONE LIFE TO GIVE!
AND FOR ONE PREGNANT MOMENT-- THERE IS SILENCE. IT'S AS THOUGH THE EYE OF A HURRICANE WERE PASSING OVERHEAD, AND IN THAT UNEARTHLY CALM, ALL MEMORY OF THE PREVIOUS MOMENT OF VIOLENCE IS FORGOTTEN.
STANDING STILL AND MOTIONLESS, THE TWO ANTAGONISTS GLARE ACROSS THE SHATTERED EXPANSE OF CONCRETE WHICH HAS BEEN THEIR BATTLEGROUND...
THEY ARE THOR, THE GOD OF THUNDER, AND CRUSHER CREEL, THE ABSORBING MAN.
FOR THE PAST TWELVE MINUTES, THEY HAVE BATTLED FIERCELY-- AND NOW, FOR ONE PRECIOUS MOMENT, THEY HAVE PAUSED, EACH FOR HIS OWN REASON.
AND AS BOTH MEN KNOW-- THAT PAUSE IS ALMOST OVER!
CHAPTER ONE: CRISIS!
GERRY CONWAY, AUTHOR
JOHN BUSCEMA & JOE SINNOTT, ARTISTS
ARTIE SIMEK, LETTERER
PHIL RACHE, COLORIST
LEN WEIN EDITOR

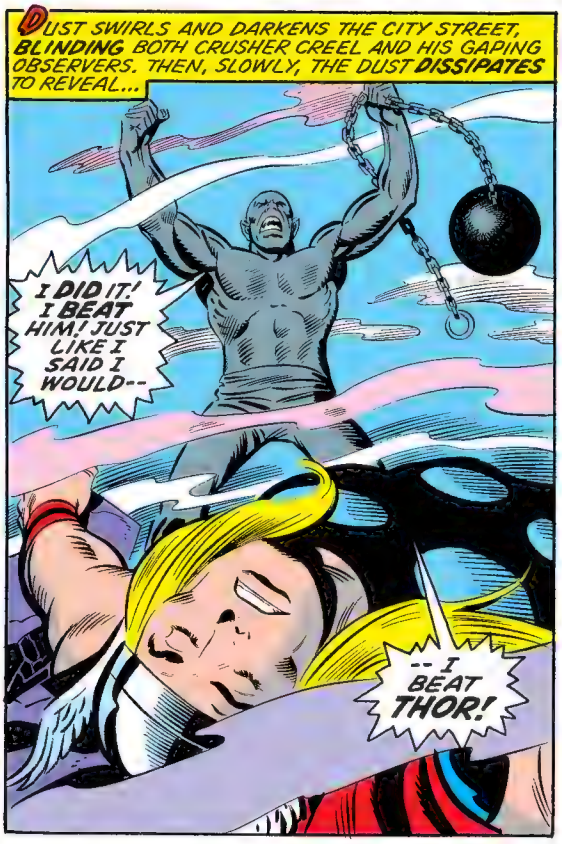

BY MY SOUL, WILL THIS STRUGGLE NEVER END?
WHILE I FIGHT THIS MADMAN, JANE FOSTER LIES NEAR DEATH--AND I MAY DO NAUGHT TO SAVE HER!
THE LONGER THIS BATTLE PERSISTS--THE LONGER I AM KEPT FROM HER SIDE--
--AND THE CLOSER SHE COMES TO DYING!
MAY HELA TAKE THEE, CRUSHER CREEL! WHY DIDST THOU HAVE TO ATTACK ME NOW?*
*THE ABSORBING MAN RETURNED LAST ISSUE.--LEN.
LOOK AT HIM, GLARIN' AT ME--! HE HATES MY GUTS, JUST LIKE I HATE HIS!
ALL HE CAN THINK ABOUT IS HOW HE'S GONNA BREAK MY SKULL.
WHAT HE DOESN'T KNOW IS, IF THERE'S ANY SKULL-BREAKIN' TA BE DONE AROUND HERE--
--I'M THE GUY WHO'S GONNA DO IT.!
OKAY, BLONDIE--THE PARTY'S OVER!
THIS IS WHERE WE GET DOWN TO CASES--!
KROOMM!
KNOW WHAT I MEAN?


NAY, VARLET!
POW!
THOU MAYEST HAVE THE ABILITY TO ABSORB THE POWER OF MY URU HAMMER, AND THUS TURN IT AGAINST ME--
--BUT POWER ALONE BE NOT ENOUGH TO WIN A WAR!
THOU MUST ALSO HAVE THE SPEED--AND THE SKILL--OF A WARRIOR BORN!
BOMM!
NUTS! YOU REMIND ME OF A TEACHER I KNEW WHEN I WUZ A KID, GOLDILOCKS!
HE LIKED TA USE BIG WORDS, JUST LIKE YOU--BUT WHEN US KIDS GOT HIM IN AN ALLEY AND STARTED BEATIN' ON HIM--
--HE STARTED BLEEDIN' LIKE EVERYBODY ELSE!
HAH! DIDN'T EXPECT ME TA TRIP YA WHILE I WUZ DOWN, DIDYA?
THAT'S THE TROUBLE WIT' JERKS LIKE YOU, THOR--!
YA NEVER LEARN TA TROMP A GUY WHEN HE'S DOWN!
NOW THAT HALF-BROTHER OF YOURS, LOKI --THE GUY WHO GAVE ME MY ABSORBIN' POWER--!
HE'S A FELLA WHO KNOWS THE SCORE!
PAY MORE ATTENTION TA HIM, THUNDER GOD--AND MAYBE YOU'LL GET SOMEWHERE!


I HAVE NO LOVE FOR LOKI, CRUSHER CREEL--NOR FOR THEE.
LOKI GAVE THEE THY POWER MANY YEARS AGO TO USE THEE AS A TOOL--BY WHICH HE WOULD STEAL THE THRONE OF ASGARD!*
I DEFEATED THEE THEN--AND SO I SHALL DEFEAT THEE NOW!
*WAY BACK IN THOR #116. --LEN.


NOT A CHANCE, THOR. YA ALMOST FINISHED ME ONCE AN' FER ALL THE LAST TIME WE FOUGHT*--
--AND I AINT NEVER GIVIN' YA THE CHANCE TO DO IT AGAIN!
*THOR #207. --LEN.

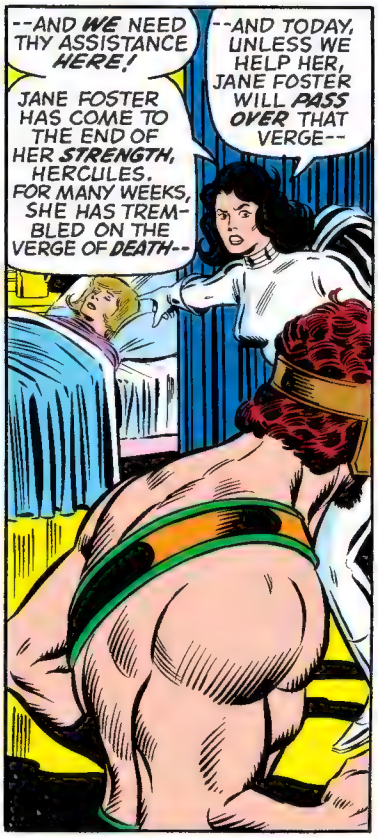
NEVER!
WHAA
MM!

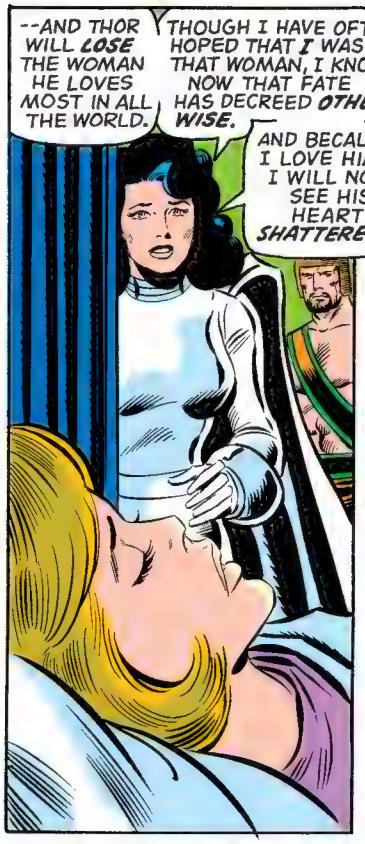

DUST SWIRLS AND DARKENS THE CITY STREET, BLINDING BOTH CRUSHER CREEL AND HIS GAPING OBSERVERS. THEN, SLOWLY, THE DUST DISSIPATES TO REVEAL...
I DID IT! I BEAT HIM! JUST LIKE I SAID I WOULD--
-- I BEAT THOR!

I ALWAYS KNEW I COULD DO IT! ALL I EVER NEEDED WUZ A PLAN--AND THIS TIME, I HAD ONE!
HOLD IT! IF YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING TO GET AWAY WITH THIS, YOU'VE GOT ANOTHER--
UURRRNNHH!
YA STUPID COP! I DON'T THINK I'LL GET AWAY WITH THIS--
--I ALREADY HAVE!
I CAN ABSORB ANYTHING, UNDERSTAND? EVEN THE POWER OF THOR'S HAMMER!
THAT'S WHAT I DID--AND IT MADE ME STRONGER THAN THOR--
--STRONGER THAN ANYTHING!
EEEEEEEEEE
LOOK OUT! HE'S CRAZY!
CRAZY, HUH? MAYBE I AM! IF ANYBODY HAD TOLD ME I'D HAVE THIS KINDA POWER SOMEDAY--I'D HAVE THOUGHT HE WUZ NUTS, TOO!
BUT I'VE GOT THE POWER, SEE?
AND WITH THOR BEATEN--THERE AINT NOBODY WHO CAN STOP ME FROM DOIN' WHAT I WANT!
CRAAASSHH!

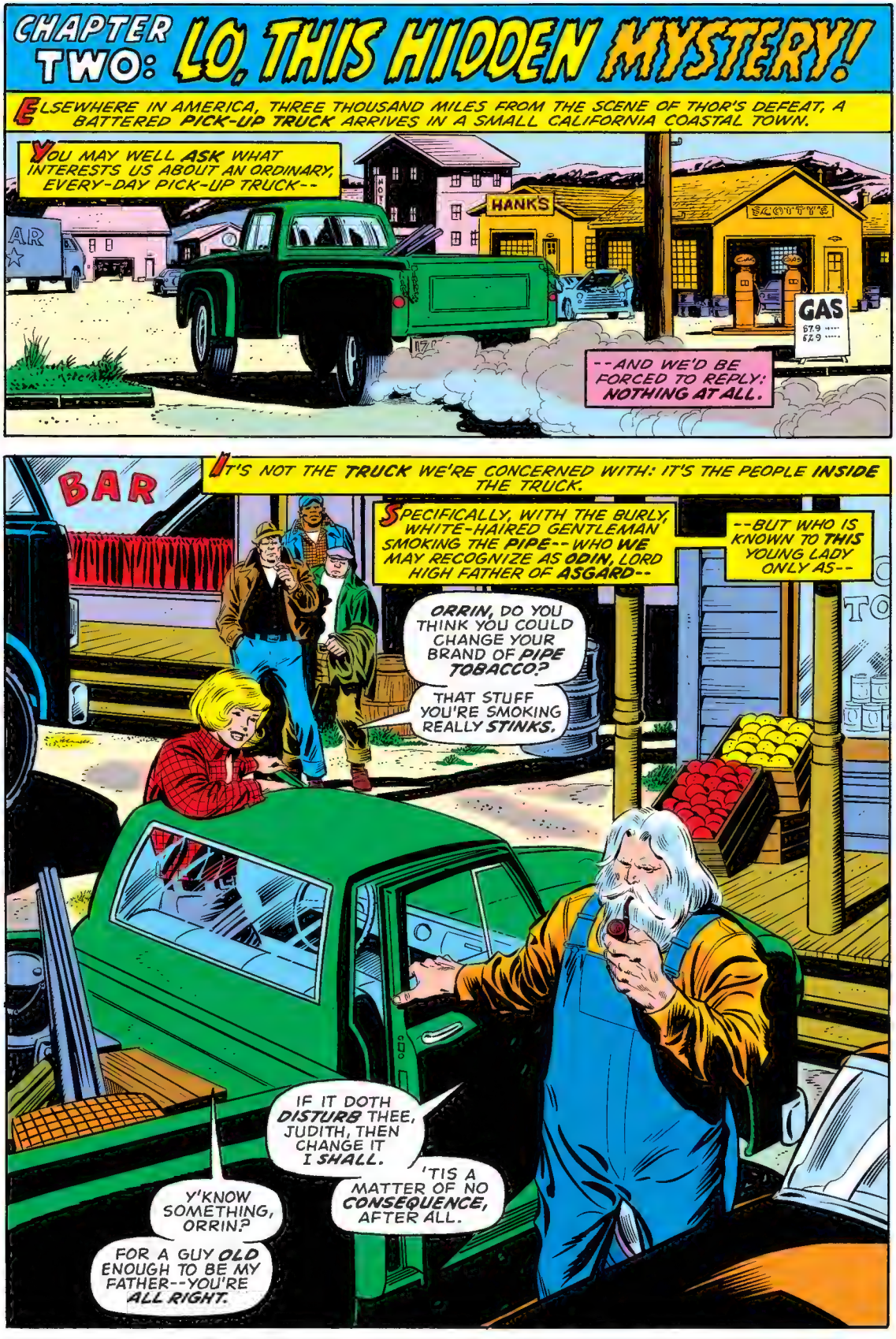
NOBODY!
HA HA HA HA HA
LAUGHTER RISES IN THE STREET, RAGING, MANIACAL LAUGHTER THAT CHILLS THE SPINES OF ALL WHO REMAIN TO HEAR IT...

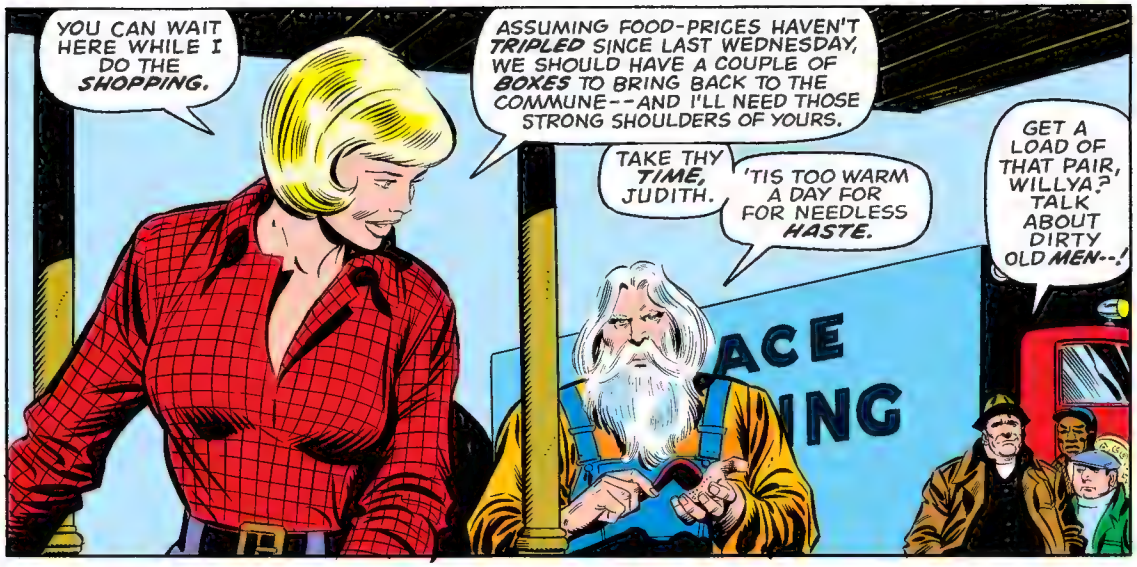
...INCLUDING THOSE WHO HAVE WATCHED THE BATTLE FROM ABOVE, UNABLE TO ACT, UNWILLING TO TURN AWAY...
IN THE NAME OF OLYMPUS, NO!
I CAN STAND IT NO LONGER, MILADY SIF--I MUST INTERFERE! THOR DOTH NEED MY ASSISTANCE--
THOMP!

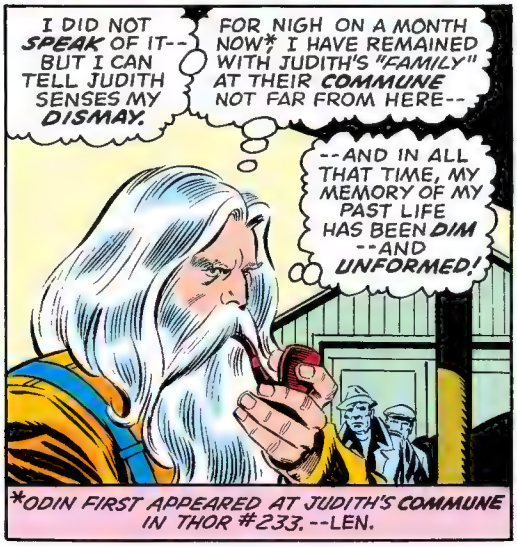

--AND WE NEED THY ASSISTANCE HERE!
JANE FOSTER HAS COME TO THE END OF HER STRENGTH, HERCULES. FOR MANY WEEKS, SHE HAS TREMBLED ON THE VERGE OF DEATH--
--AND TODAY, UNLESS WE HELP HER, JANE FOSTER WILL PASS OVER THAT VERGE--

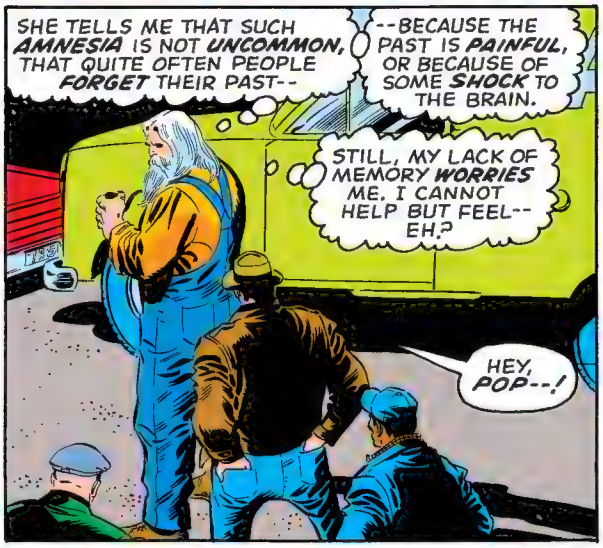

--AND THOR WILL LOSE THE WOMAN HE LOVES MOST IN ALL THE WORLD.
THOUGH I HAVE OFTEN HOPED THAT I WAS THAT WOMAN, I KNOW NOW THAT FATE HAS DECREED OTHERWISE.
AND BECAUSE I LOVE HIM, I WILL NOT SEE HIS HEART SHATTERED--

--BY A DEATH WHICH MAY YET BE PREVENTED.
VIZIER, GIVE ME THE RUNESTAFF WHICH HERCULES AND I STOLE FROM KAMO THARNN.*
THE TIME TO BEGIN--IS NIGH.
*SHOWN LAST ISSUE. --LEN.


CHAPTER TWO: LO, THIS HIDDEN MYSTERY!
ELSEWHERE IN AMERICA, THREE THOUSAND MILES FROM THE SCENE OF THOR'S DEFEAT, A BATTERED PICK-UP TRUCK ARRIVES IN A SMALL CALIFORNIA COASTAL TOWN.
YOU MAY WELL ASK WHAT INTERESTS US ABOUT AN ORDINARY, EVERY-DAY PICK-UP TRUCK--
HANK'S
SCOTTY'S
GAS
--AND WE'D BE FORCED TO REPLY: NOTHING AT ALL.
BAR
IT'S NOT THE TRUCK WE'RE CONCERNED WITH: IT'S THE PEOPLE INSIDE THE TRUCK.
SPECIFICALLY, WITH THE BURLY, WHITE-HAIRED GENTLEMAN SMOKING THE PIPE-- WHO WE MAY RECOGNIZE AS ODIN, LORD HIGH FATHER OF ASGARD--
--BUT WHO IS KNOWN TO THIS YOUNG LADY ONLY AS--
ORRIN, DO YOU THINK YOU COULD CHANGE YOUR BRAND OF PIPE TOBACCO?
THAT STUFF YOU'RE SMOKING REALLY STINKS.
IF IT DOTH DISTURB THEE, JUDITH, THEN CHANGE IT I SHALL.
'TIS A MATTER OF NO CONSEQUENCE, AFTER ALL.
Y'KNOW SOMETHING, ORRIN?
FOR A GUY OLD ENOUGH TO BE MY FATHER--YOU'RE ALL RIGHT.


YOU CAN WAIT HERE WHILE I DO THE SHOPPING.
ASSUMING FOOD-PRICES HAVEN'T TRIPLED SINCE LAST WEDNESDAY, WE SHOULD HAVE A COUPLE OF BOXES TO BRING BACK TO THE COMMUNE--AND I'LL NEED THOSE STRONG SHOULDERS OF YOURS.
TAKE THY TIME, JUDITH.
'TIS TOO WARM A DAY FOR FOR NEEDLESS HASTE.
GET A LOAD OF THAT PAIR, WILLYA? TALK ABOUT DIRTY OLD MEN--!

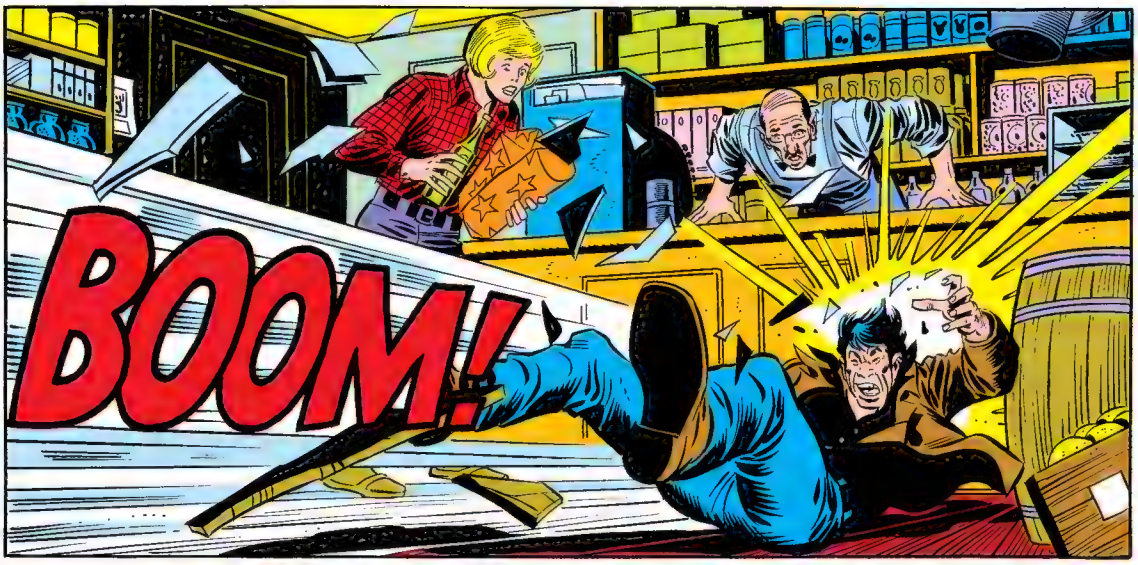

I DID NOT SPEAK OF IT--BUT I CAN TELL JUDITH SENSES MY DISMAY.
FOR NIGH ON A MONTH NOW* I HAVE REMAINED WITH JUDITH'S "FAMILY" AT THEIR COMMUNE NOT FAR FROM HERE--
--AND IN ALL THAT TIME, MY MEMORY OF MY PAST LIFE HAS BEEN DIM --AND UNFORMED!
*ODIN FIRST APPEARED AT JUDITH'S COMMUNE IN THOR #233. --LEN.

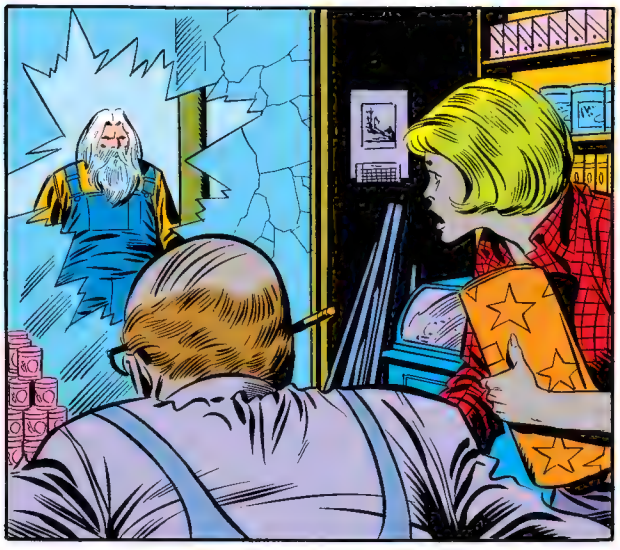

SHE TELLS ME THAT SUCH AMNESIA IS NOT UNCOMMON, THAT QUITE OFTEN PEOPLE FORGET THEIR PAST--
--BECAUSE THE PAST IS PAINFUL, OR BECAUSE OF SOME SHOCK TO THE BRAIN.
STILL, MY LACK OF MEMORY WORRIES ME. I CANNOT HELP BUT FEEL--EH?
HEY, POP--!

MY BUDDIES AND I WANNA HAVE A TALK WITH YOU, POP.
WE'RE NOT SURE WE APPROVE OF AN OLD GEEZER LIKE YOU HANGIN' AROUND A YOUNG BROAD--
IT AINT--NATURAL --SEE?

THY OPINION IS OF NO IMPORT TO ME, BRIGAND.
GET THEE HENCE, LEST THOU DOTH SOON REGRET THY INDISCRETION.
SAY, FRISKY OLD CODGER, AINT HE?

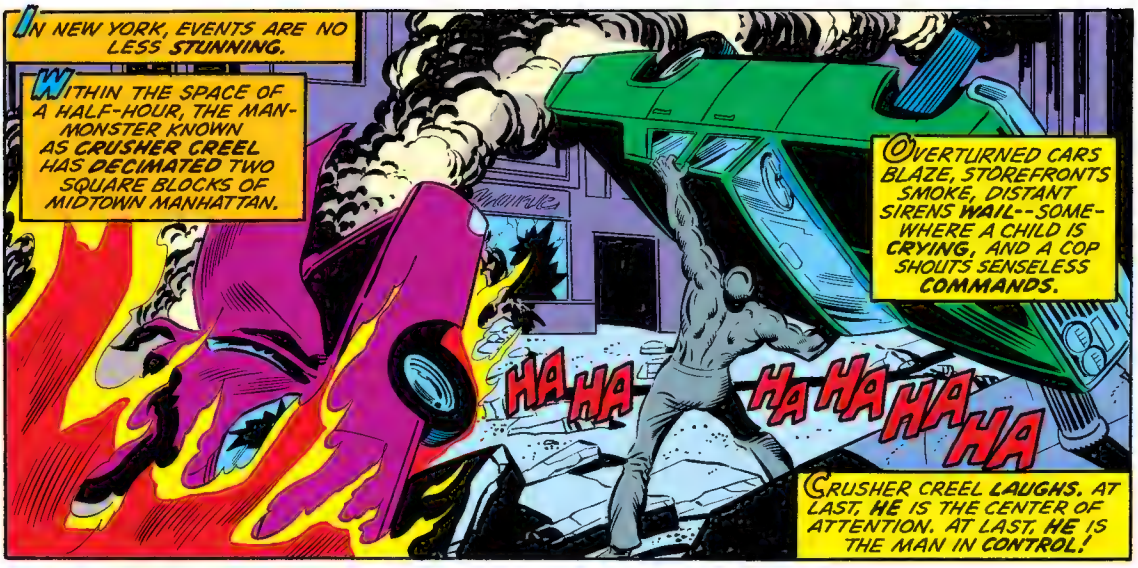
MAYBE IT'S HIGH TIME SOMEBODY TAUGHT HIM MANNERS!
YEAH--AND WE'RE JUST THE GUYS TO DO IT, TOO!
BY MY SOUL, THIS IS UTTER MADNESS. I HAVE NO QUARREL WITH THEE, BUT IF THOU MUST PERSIST--
--I SHALL DISPOSE OF THEE AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE!
YEEEOOWWUNNK!
UURROOWUNNK!
TUMP!
BOOP!
THEM'S MY BUDDIES YOU CHUCKED OVER THERE, WISE-GUY!
YOU MUST BE SOME SORTA CIRCUS STRONG-MAN--
--BUT WE'LL SEE HOW STRONG YA IS AFTER I HIT YA WITH THIS BILLY CLUB!
SMAK!
HUH? YOU'RE SUPPOSED TA FALL! HOWCUM YA DON'T--
FOMM
SCRASK!

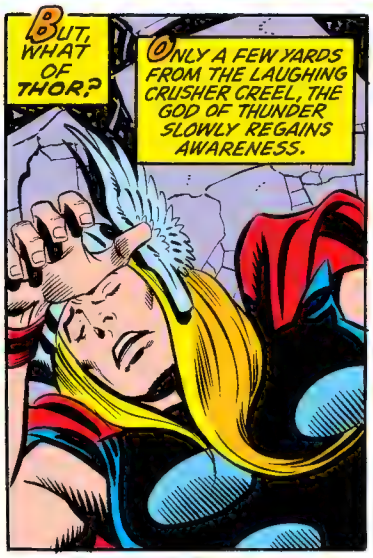

BOOM!

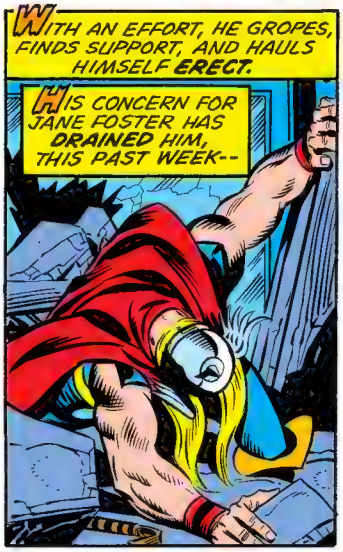


GROCE

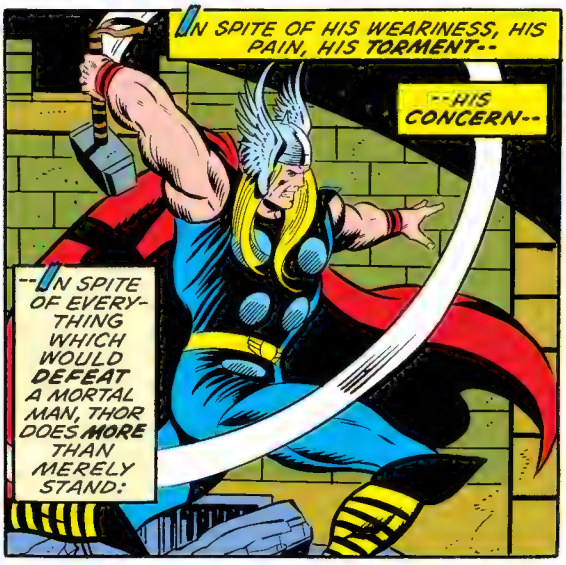
VERY SLOWLY, THE MAN JUDITH CALLS ORRIN BEGINS TO REALIZE WHAT HE'S DONE...
...AND THE IMPLICATION KNOCKS HIM SPEECHLESS.

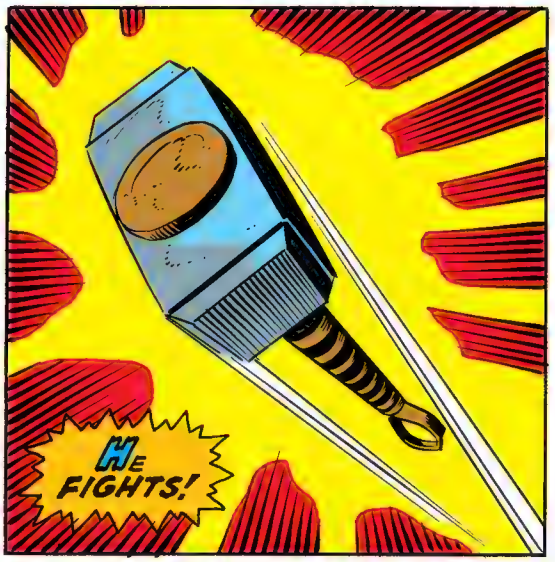

IN NEW YORK, EVENTS ARE NO LESS STUNNING.
WITHIN THE SPACE OF A HALF-HOUR, THE MAN-MONSTER KNOWN AS CRUSHER CREEL HAS DECIMATED TWO SQUARE BLOCKS OF MIDTOWN MANHATTAN.
OVERTURNED CARS BLAZE, STOREFRONTS SMOKE, DISTANT SIRENS WAIL--SOMEWHERE A CHILD IS CRYING, AND A COP SHOUTS SENSELESS COMMANDS.
HA HA
HA HA HA HA
CRUSHER CREEL LAUGHS. AT LAST, HE IS THE CENTER OF ATTENTION. AT LAST, HE IS THE MAN IN CONTROL!

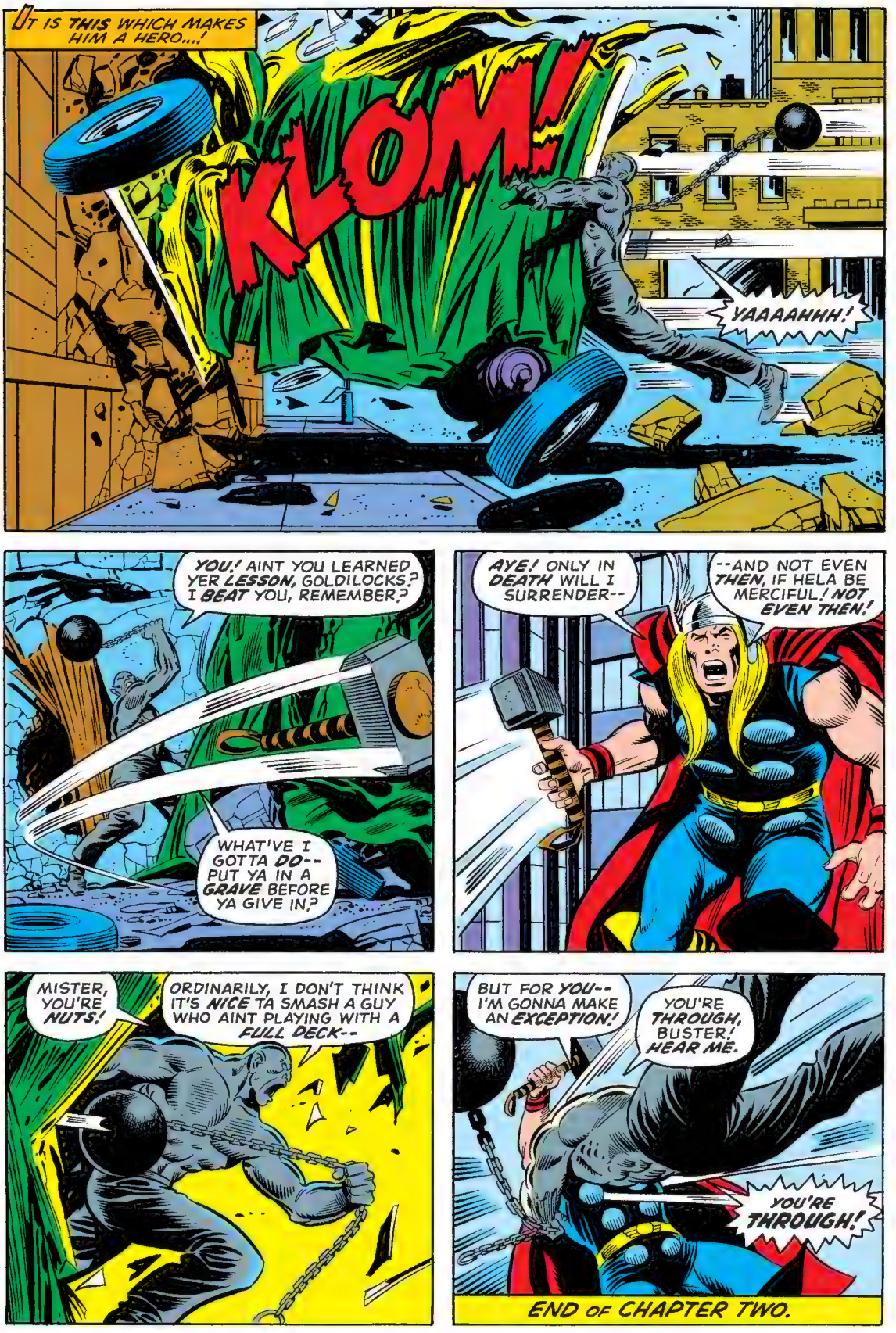

BUT, WHAT OF THOR?
ONLY A FEW YARDS FROM THE LAUGHING CRUSHER CREEL, THE GOD OF THUNDER SLOWLY REGAINS AWARENESS.


WITH AN EFFORT, HE GROPES, FINDS SUPPORT, AND HAULS HIMSELF ERECT.
HIS CONCERN FOR JANE FOSTER HAS DRAINED HIM, THIS PAST WEEK--

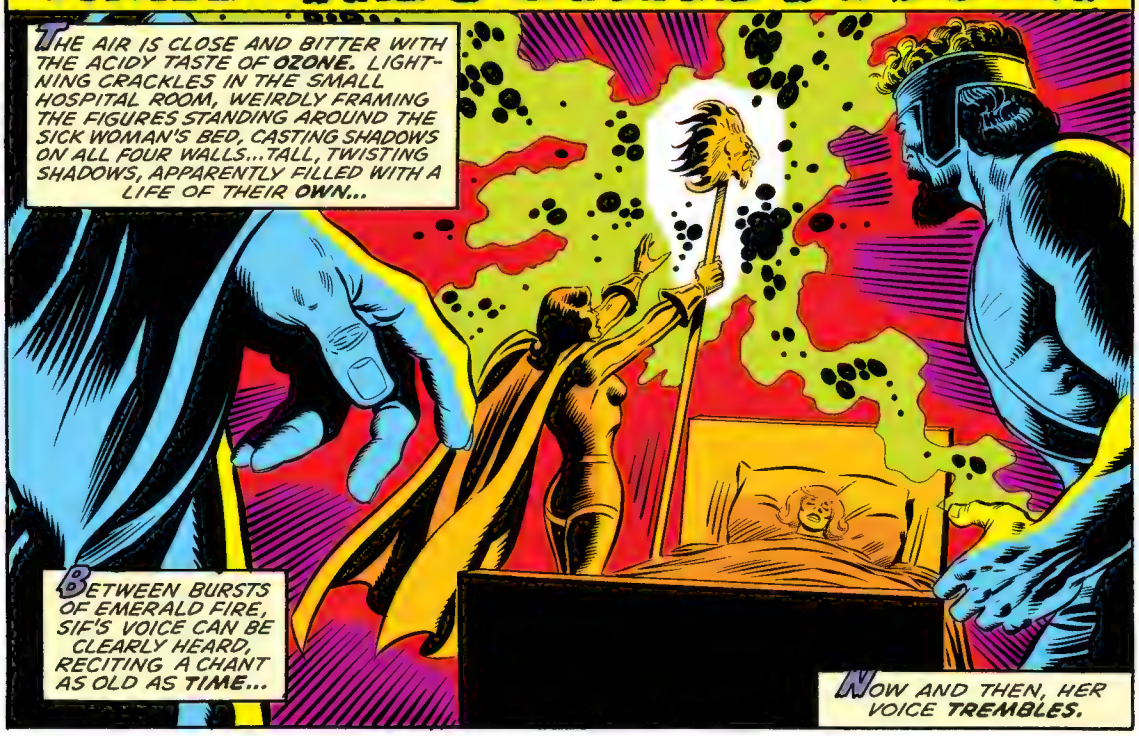
--HE STANDS EXHAUSTED, BOTH PHYSICALLY AND EMOTIONALLY DEPLETED.
YET IT IS A MEASURE OF THE MAN--THAT HE STANDS AT ALL.
AND MORE:

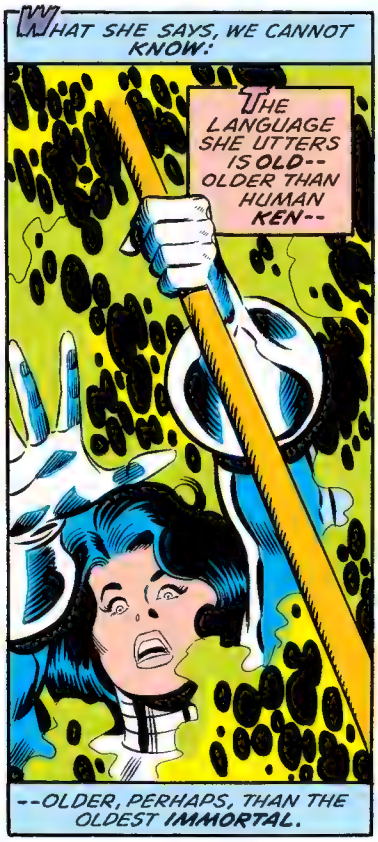

IN SPITE OF HIS WEARINESS, HIS PAIN, HIS TORMENT--
--HIS CONCERN--
--IN SPITE OF EVERY-THING WHICH WOULD DEFEAT A MORTAL MAN, THOR DOES MORE THAN MERELY STAND:


HE FIGHTS!


IT IS THIS WHICH MAKES HIM A HERO...!
KLOM!!
YAAAAHHH!
YOU! AINT YOU LEARNED YER LESSON, GOLDILOCKS? I BEAT YOU, REMEMBER?
WHAT'VE I GOTTA DO-- PUT YA IN A GRAVE BEFORE YA GIVE IN?
AYE! ONLY IN DEATH WILL I SURRENDER--
--AND NOT EVEN THEN, IF HELA BE MERCIFUL! NOT EVEN THEN!
MISTER, YOU'RE NUTS!
ORDINARILY, I DON'T THINK IT'S NICE TA SMASH A GUY WHO AINT PLAYING WITH A FULL DECK--
BUT FOR YOU-- I'M GONNA MAKE AN EXCEPTION!
YOU'RE THROUGH, BUSTER! HEAR ME.
YOU'RE THROUGH!
END OF CHAPTER TWO.

CHAPTER THREE: RESURRECTION!

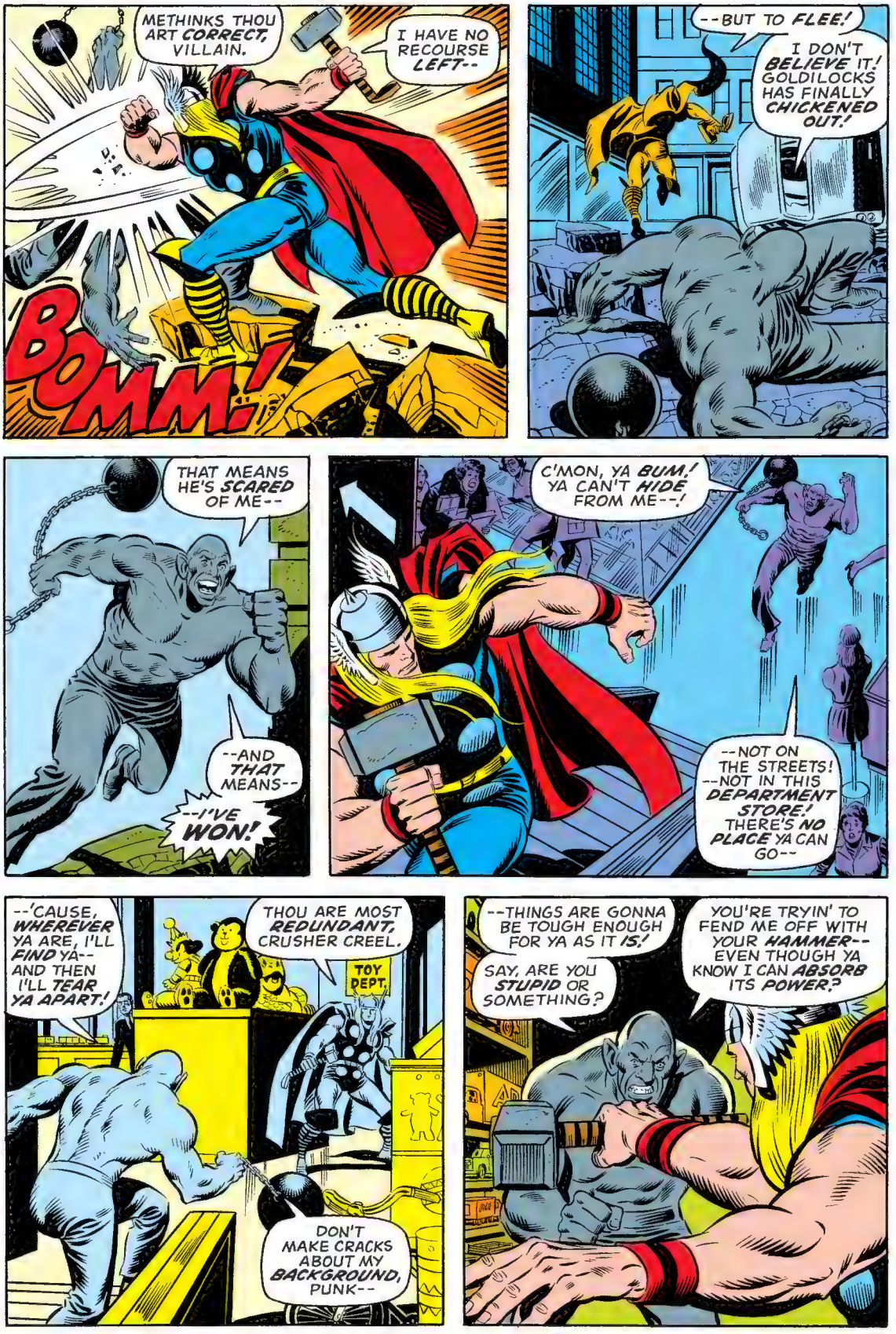

THE AIR IS CLOSE AND BITTER WITH THE ACIDY TASTE OF OZONE. LIGHTNING CRACKLES IN THE SMALL HOSPITAL ROOM, WEIRDLY FRAMING THE FIGURES STANDING AROUND THE SICK WOMAN'S BED, CASTING SHADOWS ON ALL FOUR WALLS...TALL, TWISTING SHADOWS, APPARENTLY FILLED WITH A LIFE OF THEIR OWN...
BETWEEN BURSTS OF EMERALD FIRE, SIF'S VOICE CAN BE CLEARLY HEARD, RECITING A CHANT AS OLD AS TIME...
NOW AND THEN, HER VOICE TREMBLES.



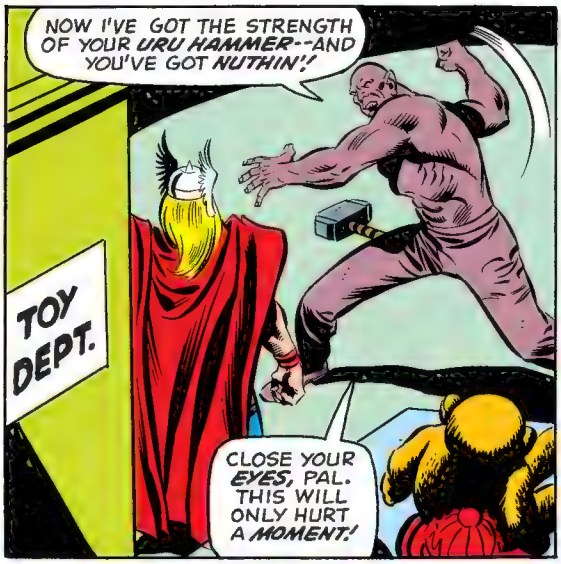
THERE IS A RHYTHM TO HER WORDS, HOWEVER; A PULSE LIKE THE BEATING OF A HEART.
WHITE LIGHTNING REPLACES THE GREEN FIRE, AND THE RHYTHM SPEEDS UP.

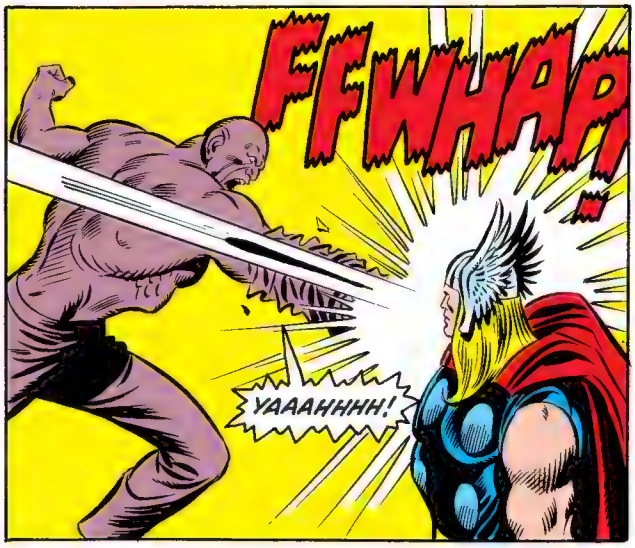
ON HER BED, JANE FOSTER GASPS. HER FACE, DRAWN AND PALLID, GOES SLACK--HER BREATHING IS SHALLOW, HER LIPS DRY AND COLD.
THEN, ALL AT ONCE, HER FACE IS OBSCURED BY A BURST OF GREEN FIRE--AND JANE FOSTER VANISHES FROM THE SIGHT OF MEN!

IN THE NAME OF OLYMPUS--IS THIS NECESSARY, VIZIER?
THESE LIGHTS--THAT SMELL--!
THE MORTAL FEMALE FEELS NO PAIN, HERCULES. WHAT IS DONE, IS DONE TO SAVE HER.
THAT MAY BE SO, OLD MAN. I ONLY PRAY THAT WHILE SAVING HER--
--WE DON'T KILL HER!
MEANWHILE, IN THE STREET BELOW...
CHUMP!
YA FELT THAT, DIDN'T YA, THUNDER GOD? YEAH--AND YOU'RE GONNA KEEP FEELIN' IT UNTIL YOU GIVE UP!
I'M GONNA HURT YOU FOR WHAT YOU DID TO ME LAST TIME WE FOUGHT--!
"YOU KNOCKED ME INTO A RIVER WHILE I WAS DOIN' MY ABSORBIN' BIT*--
*UP IN RUTLAND, VT., AS SHOWN IN THOR #207.--LEN.
"--AND INSTEAD OF ABSORBING THE POWER OF WOOD, WHICH WAS WHAT I TRYING TO DO--
"--I TURNED TO WATER--
"--AND ALMOST DIED!
"LUCKY FOR ME, I PASSED AGAINST A ROCK WHILE THE RIVER MOVED DOWN-STREAM--
"--AND I ABSORBED THAT, WHICH LET ME SURVIVE. IT TOOK ME SIX MONTHS TO GET MY NERVE BACK AFTER THAT--"
--AND THEN I LAY LOW FOR ANOTHER FEW MONTHS, FIGURING OUT A PLAN TO BEAT YOU ONCE AN' FER ALL!
I'VE GOT MY PLAN NOW, BUSTER--AND YOU'VE HAD IT!


METHINKS THOU ART CORRECT, VILLAIN.
I HAVE NO RECOURSE LEFT--
BOMM!
--BUT TO FLEE!
I DON'T BELIEVE IT! GOLDILOCKS HAS FINALLY CHICKENED OUT!
THAT MEANS HE'S SCARED OF ME--
--AND THAT MEANS--
--I'VE WON!
C'MON, YA BUM! YA CAN'T HIDE FROM ME--!
--NOT ON THE STREETS! --NOT IN THIS DEPARTMENT STORE! THERE'S NO PLACE YA CAN GO--
--'CAUSE, WHEREVER YA ARE, I'LL FIND YA-- AND THEN I'LL TEAR YA APART!
THOU ART MOST REDUNDANT, CRUSHER CREEL.
TOY DEPT.
DON'T MAKE CRACKS ABOUT MY BACKGROUND, PUNK--
--THINGS ARE GONNA BE TOUGH ENOUGH FOR YA AS IT IS!
SAY, ARE YOU STUPID OR SOMETHING?
YOU'RE TRYIN' TO FEND ME OFF WITH YOUR HAMMER-- EVEN THOUGH YA KNOW I CAN ABSORB ITS POWER?

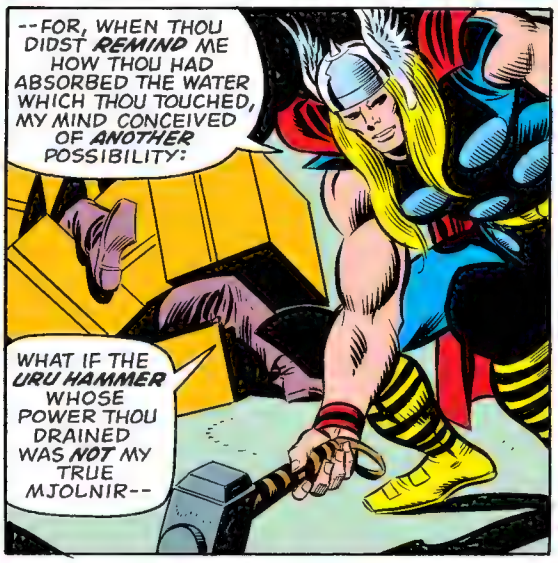
NOT ONLY ARE YOU A COWARD-- YOU'RE CRAZY, TOO!


NOW I'VE GOT THE STRENGTH OF YOUR URU HAMMER--AND YOU'VE GOT NUTHIN'!
TOY DEPT.
CLOSE YOUR EYES, PAL. THIS WILL ONLY HURT A MOMENT!

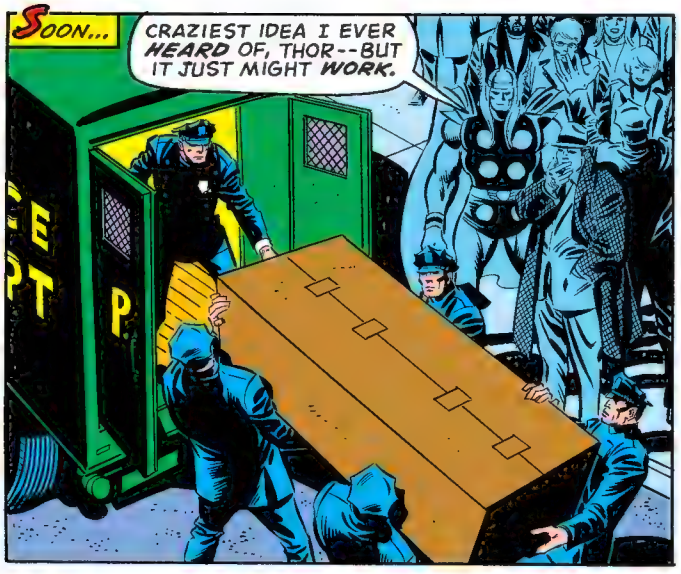

FFWHAP
YAAAHHHH!

MY HAND! WHAT HAPPENED TO MY HAND?!?

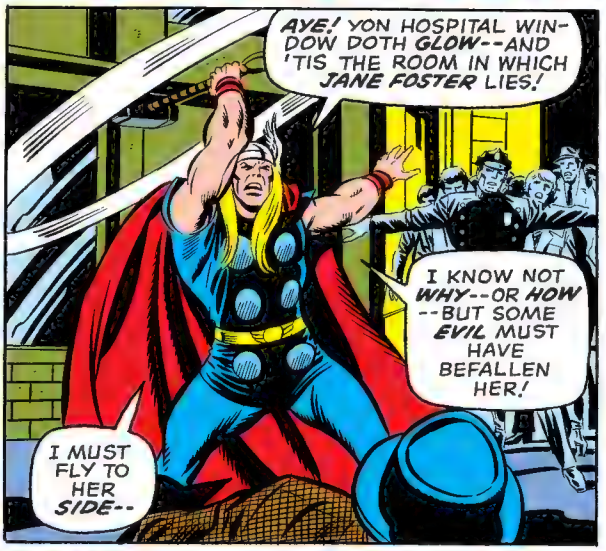
I LEAVE IT FOR THEE TO PONDER THE ANSWER, CRUSHER CREEL.
BOMP!
'TWAS THY STORY OF THY LAST DEFEAT WHICH INSPIRED MY TRICK--

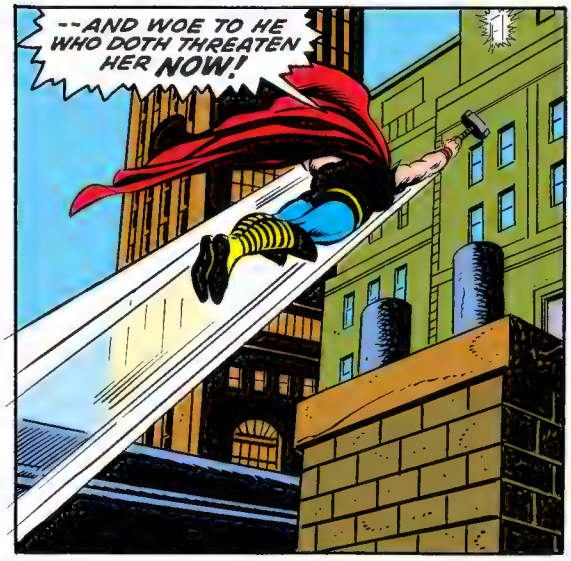

--FOR, WHEN THOU DIDST REMIND ME HOW THOU HAD ABSORBED THE WATER WHICH THOU TOUCHED, MY MIND CONCEIVED OF ANOTHER POSSIBILITY:
WHAT IF THE URU HAMMER WHOSE POWER THOU DRAINED WAS NOT MY TRUE MJOLNIR--

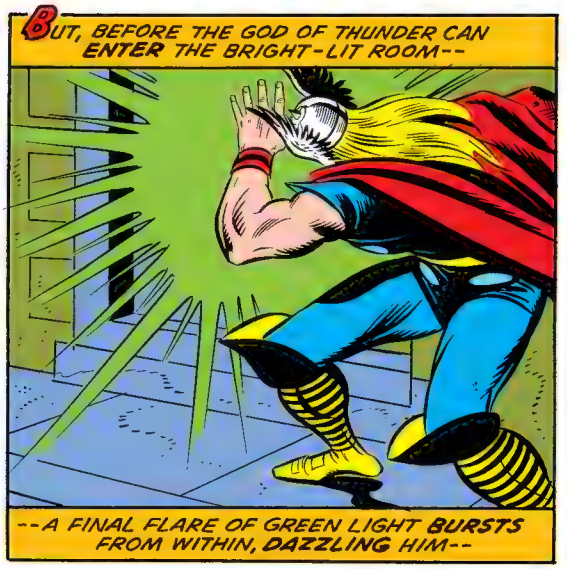
--BUT WAS A CARDBOARD TOY, FASHIONED AFTER THE LIKENESS OF MY MALLET BY A PRODUCER OF SUCH ITEMS.
'TWAS A PLAN OF SOME MERIT, I THINK.
IT ALLOWED THEE TO DEFEAT-- THYSELF.
MADE IN JAPAN ®

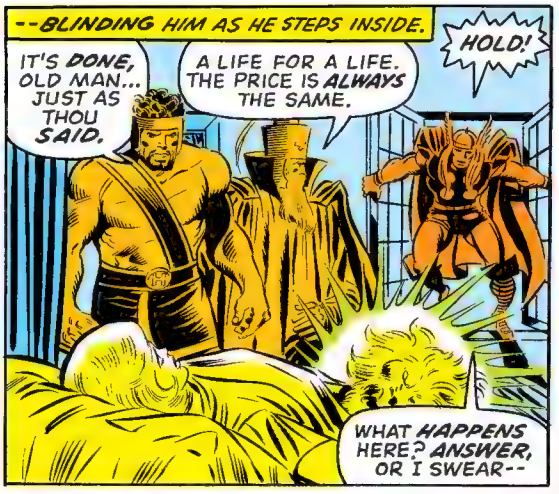

SOON...
CRAZIEST IDEA I EVER HEARD OF, THOR--BUT IT JUST MIGHT WORK.

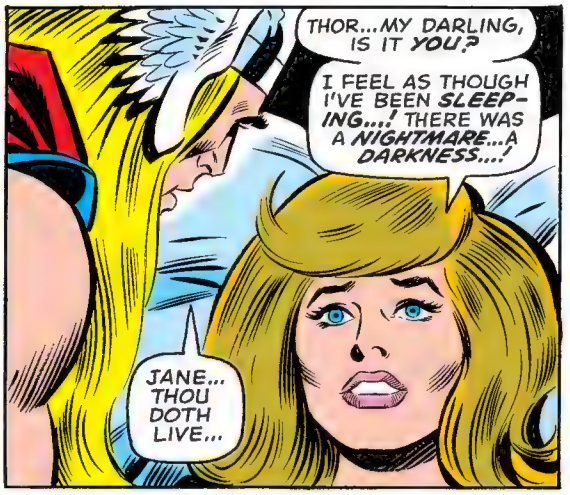
IF WE KEEP THIS GUY CREEL IN A CARDBOARD BOX, HE WON'T BE ABLE TO BUST OUT--'CAUSE EVERY TIME HE TOUCHES THE BOX, HE GETS AS WEAK AS CARDBOARD.
'TIS INDEED IRONIC, DETECTIVE BLUMKINN. ODD WE NEVER THOUGHT OF IT BEFORE.
IMAGINE--A GUY WHO REALLY CAN'T PUNCH HIS WAY OUT OF A PAPER BAG!
YEAH, BUT THAT'S THE WAY IT GOES IN THIS BUSINESS. YOU NEVER--SAY, IS SOMETHING WRONG, THOR?


AYE! YON HOSPITAL WINDOW DOTH GLOW--AND 'TIS THE ROOM IN WHICH JANE FOSTER LIES!
I KNOW NOT WHY--OR HOW --BUT SOME EVIL MUST HAVE BEFALLEN HER!
I MUST FLY TO HER SIDE--

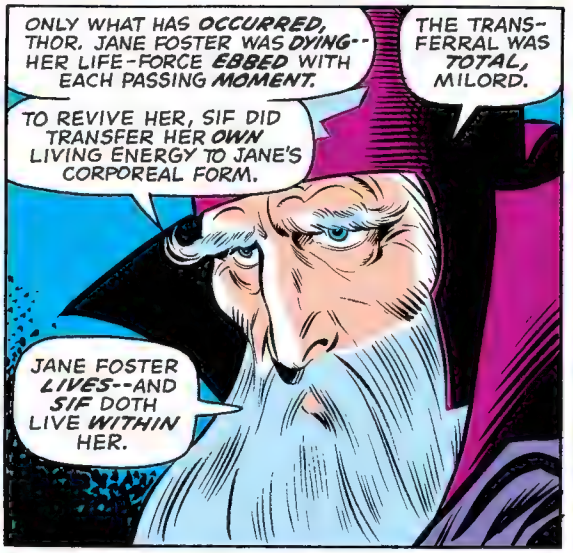

--AND WOE TO HE WHO DOTH THREATEN HER NOW!

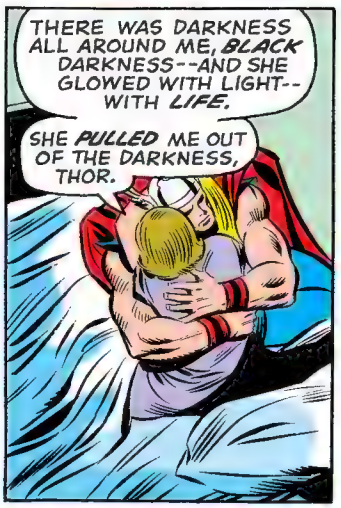

BUT, BEFORE THE GOD OF THUNDER CAN ENTER THE BRIGHT-LIT ROOM--
--A FINAL FLARE OF GREEN LIGHT BURSTS FROM WITHIN, DAZZLING HIM--

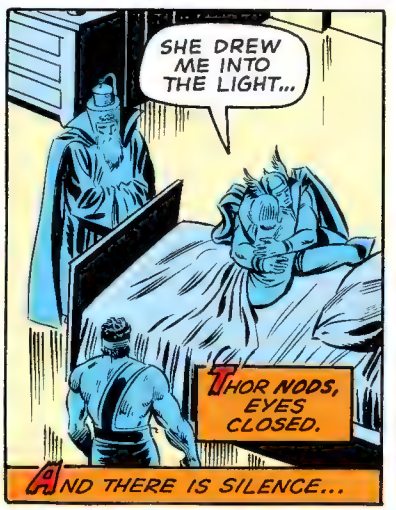

--BLINDING HIM AS HE STEPS INSIDE.
HOLD!
IT'S DONE, OLD MAN... JUST AS THOU SAID.
A LIFE FOR A LIFE. THE PRICE IS ALWAYS THE SAME.
WHAT HAPPENS HERE? ANSWER, OR I SWEAR--



THOU DOTH LIVE!
IN THE NAME OF ASGARD, 'TIS A MIRACLE! SIF, HAST THOU SEEN? SIF--
MILADY SIF--IS GONE, MILORD.
GONE?
WHAT SAYEST THOU, VIZIER?


ONLY WHAT HAS OCCURRED, THOR. JANE FOSTER WAS DYING-- HER LIFE-FORCE EBBED WITH EACH PASSING MOMENT.
THE TRANSFERRAL WAS TOTAL, MILORD.
TO REVIVE HER, SIF DID TRANSFER HER OWN LIVING ENERGY TO JANE'S CORPOREAL FORM.
JANE FOSTER LIVES--AND SIF DOTH LIVE WITHIN HER.


THERE WAS DARKNESS ALL AROUND ME, BLACK DARKNESS--AND SHE GLOWED WITH LIGHT-- WITH LIFE.
SHE PULLED ME OUT OF THE DARKNESS, THOR.



NEXT ISSUE: the NIGHT of the TROLL!

THOR
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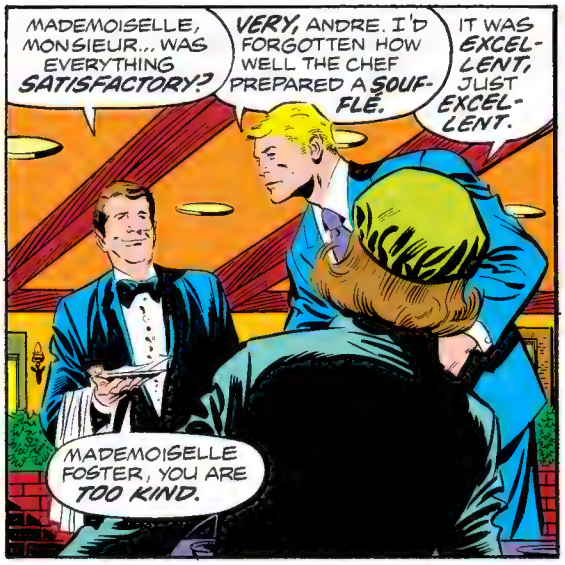
237
JULY
02450
THE MIGHTY
THOR
ULIK HAS RETURNED AT LAST--
AND THIS TIME, NOT ALL MY POWER CAN SAVE ME!
NIGHT OF THE TROLL!

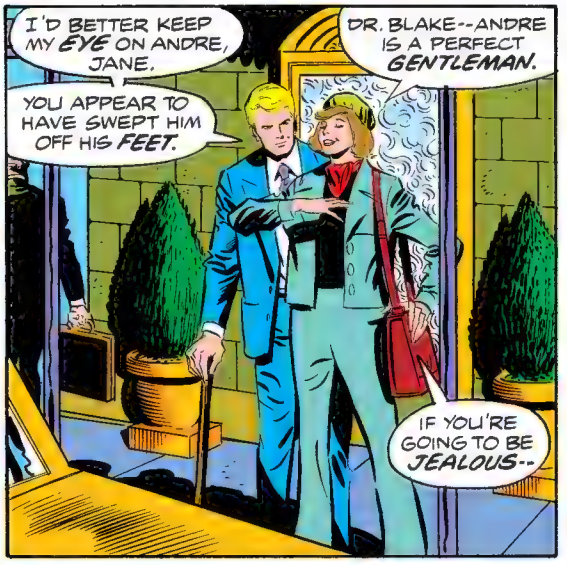
Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE MIGHTY THOR!™

GERRY CONWAY / AUTHOR | JOHN BUSCEMA / ARTIST | JOE SINNOTT / EMBELLISHER | JOHN COSTANZA, letterer / PETRA GOLDBERG, colorist | LEN WEIN / EDITOR

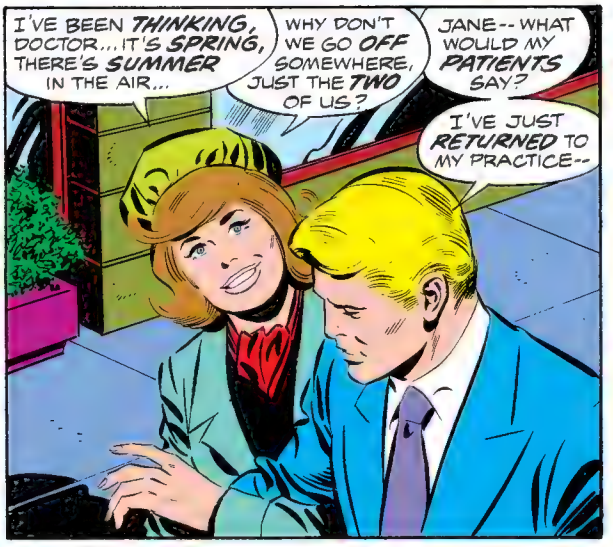
IF YOU WERE IN A CERTAIN PLUSH RESTAURANT ON MANHATTAN'S CENTRAL PARK SOUTH, YOU MIGHT NOTICE A SUBDUED COUPLE EATING A LATE LUNCH... AND THEN AGAIN, YOU MIGHT NOT. BUT IF YOU COULD SEE THE REALITY BEHIND THEIR MUNDANE APPEARANCE...
ULIK
UNCHAINED

CHAPTER ONE: THOSE WHO WATCH!

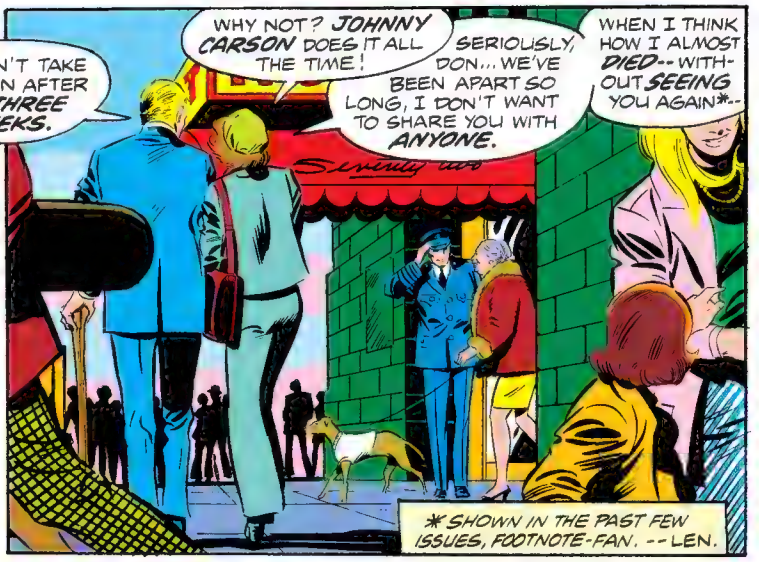

MADEMOISELLE, MONSIEUR... WAS EVERYTHING SATISFACTORY?
VERY, ANDRE. I'D FORGOTTEN HOW WELL THE CHEF PREPARED A SOUFFLÉ.
IT WAS EXCELLENT, JUST EXCELLENT.
MADEMOISELLE FOSTER, YOU ARE TOO KIND.

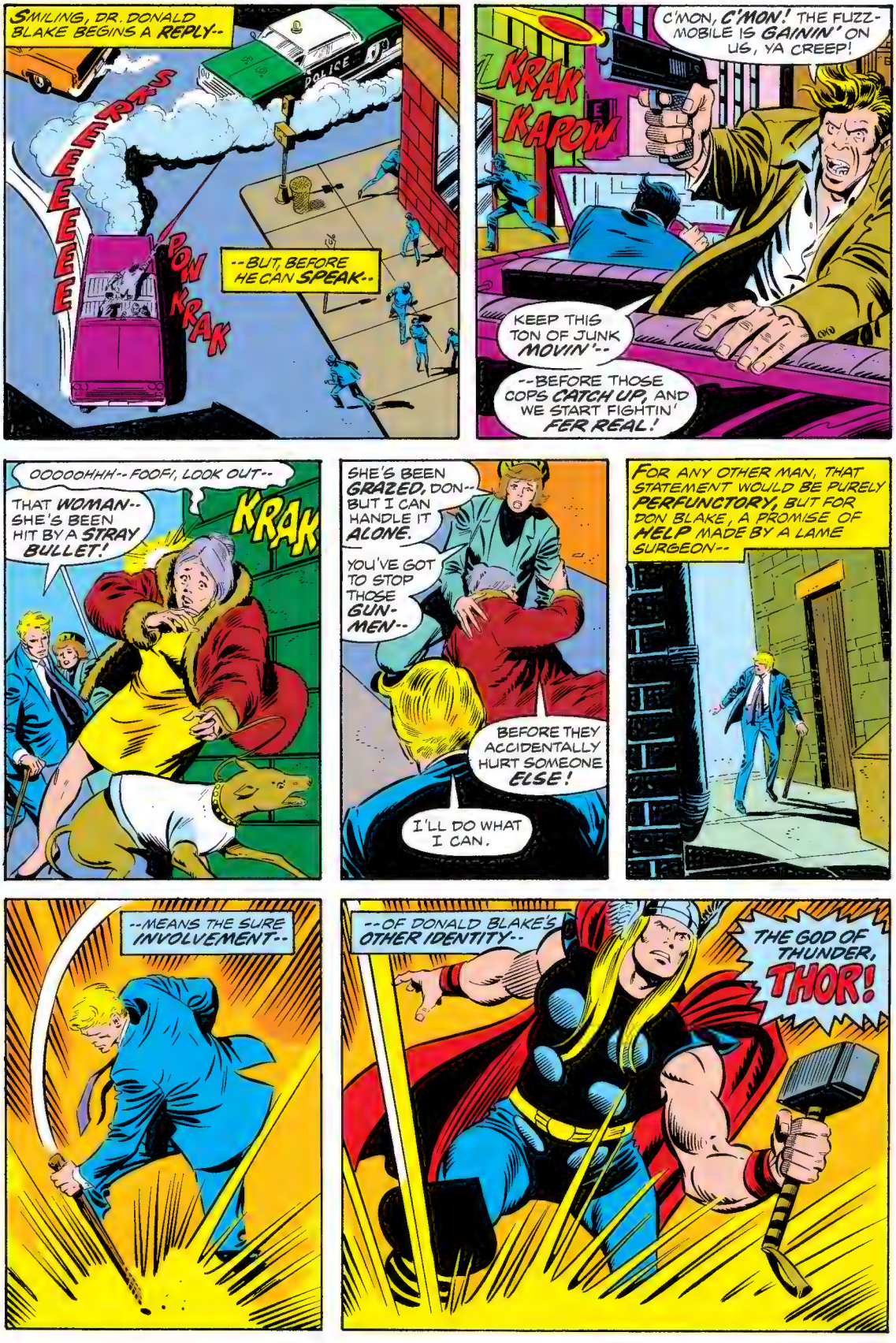

I'D BETTER KEEP MY EYE ON ANDRE, JANE.
DR. BLAKE--ANDRE IS A PERFECT GENTLEMAN.
YOU APPEAR TO HAVE SWEPT HIM OFF HIS FEET.
IF YOU'RE GOING TO BE JEALOUS--

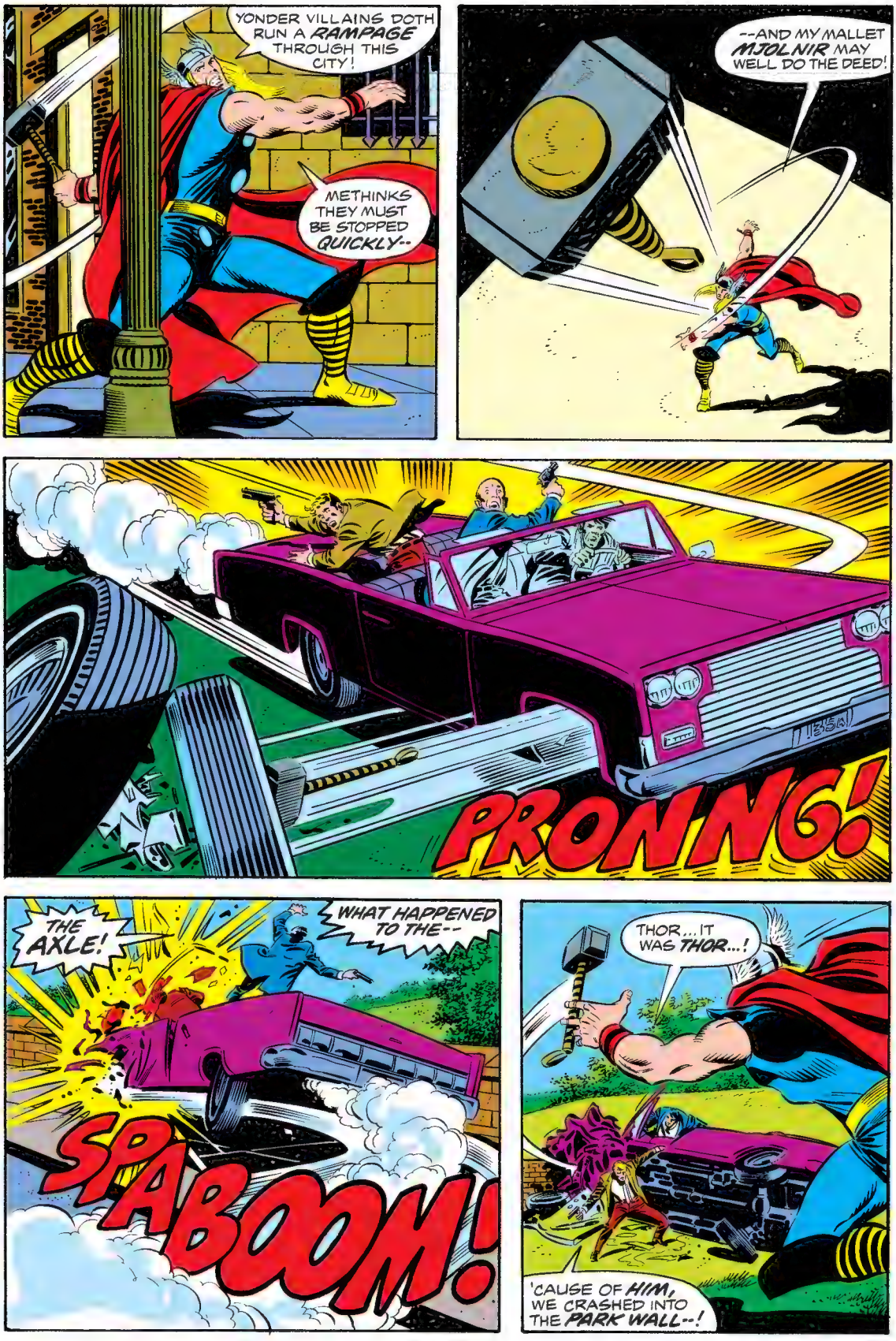
--BE JEALOUS OF THOR.
LIKE A CERTAIN GIRL REPORTER, I'M SIMPLY FASCINATED BY MY MILD BOYFRIEND'S ALTER-EGO.
HMMM...

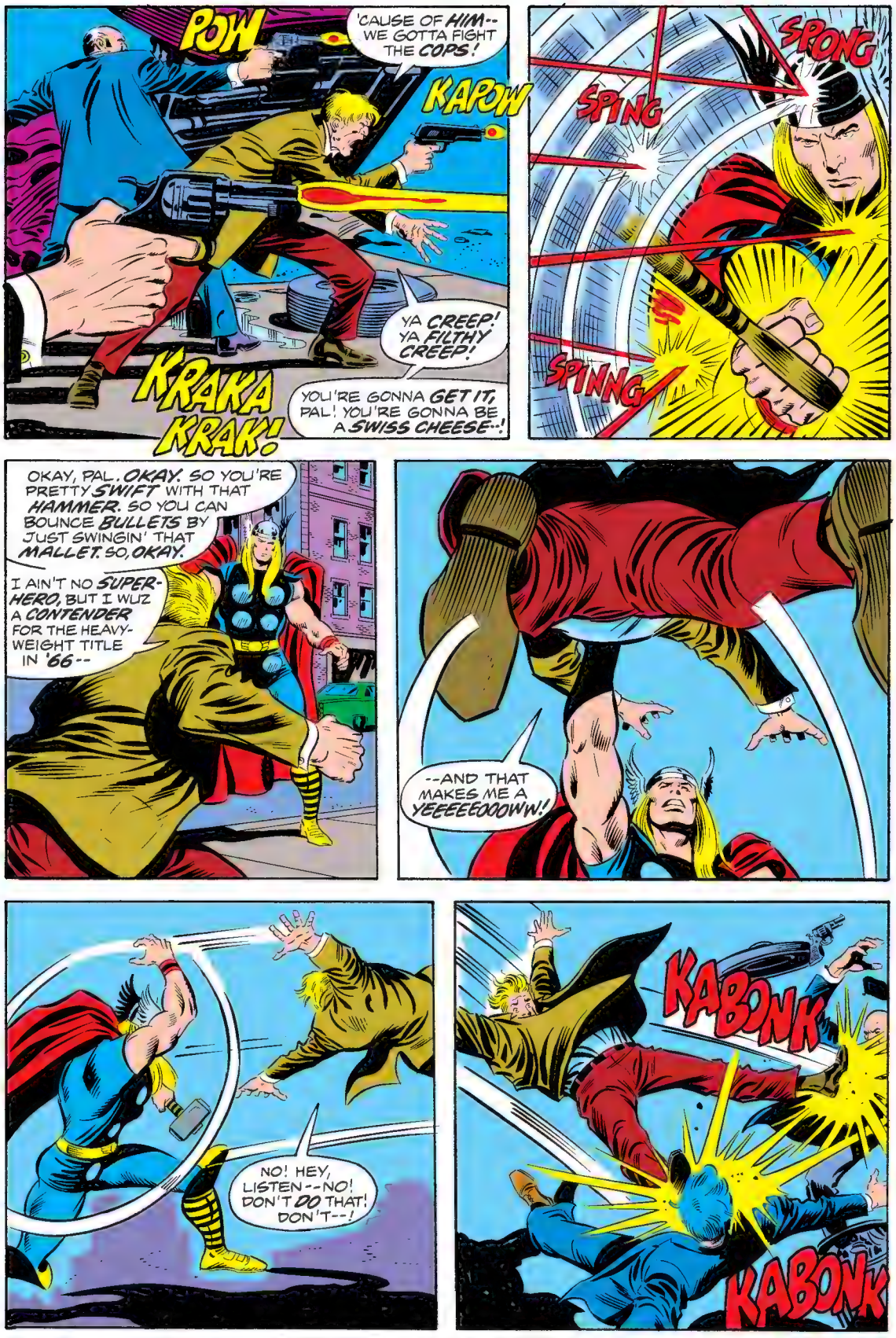

I'VE BEEN THINKING, DOCTOR... IT'S SPRING, THERE'S SUMMER IN THE AIR...
WHY DON'T WE GO OFF SOMEWHERE, JUST THE TWO OF US?
JANE--WHAT WOULD MY PATIENTS SAY?
I'VE JUST RETURNED TO MY PRACTICE--

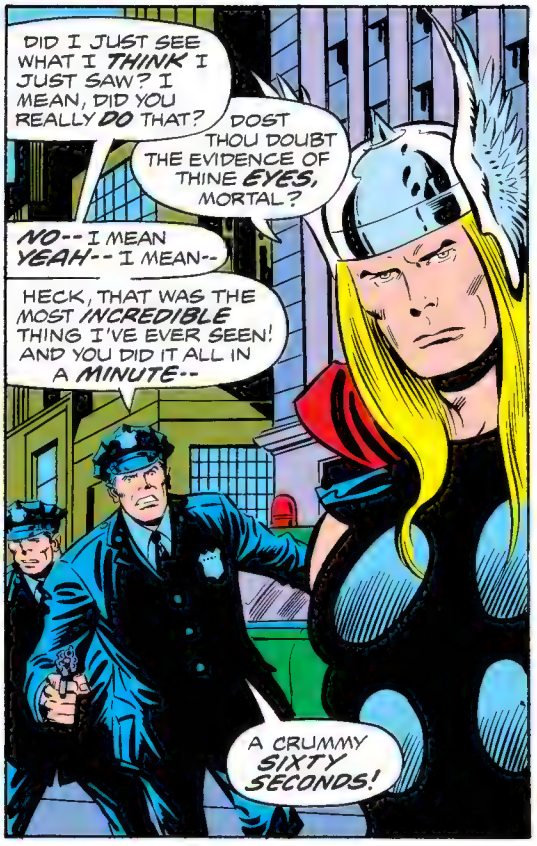
--I CAN'T TAKE A VACATION AFTER ONLY THREE WEEKS.

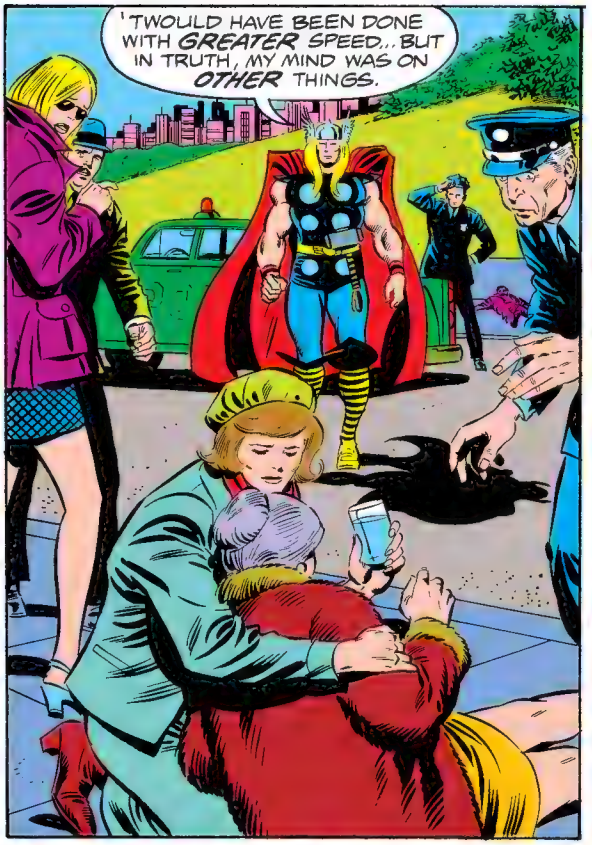

WHY NOT? JOHNNY CARSON DOES IT ALL THE TIME!
SERIOUSLY, DON... WE'VE BEEN APART SO LONG, I DON'T WANT TO SHARE YOU WITH ANYONE.
WHEN I THINK HOW I ALMOST DIED--WITHOUT SEEING YOU AGAIN*--
*SHOWN IN THE PAST FEW ISSUES, FOOTNOTE-FAN. --LEN.

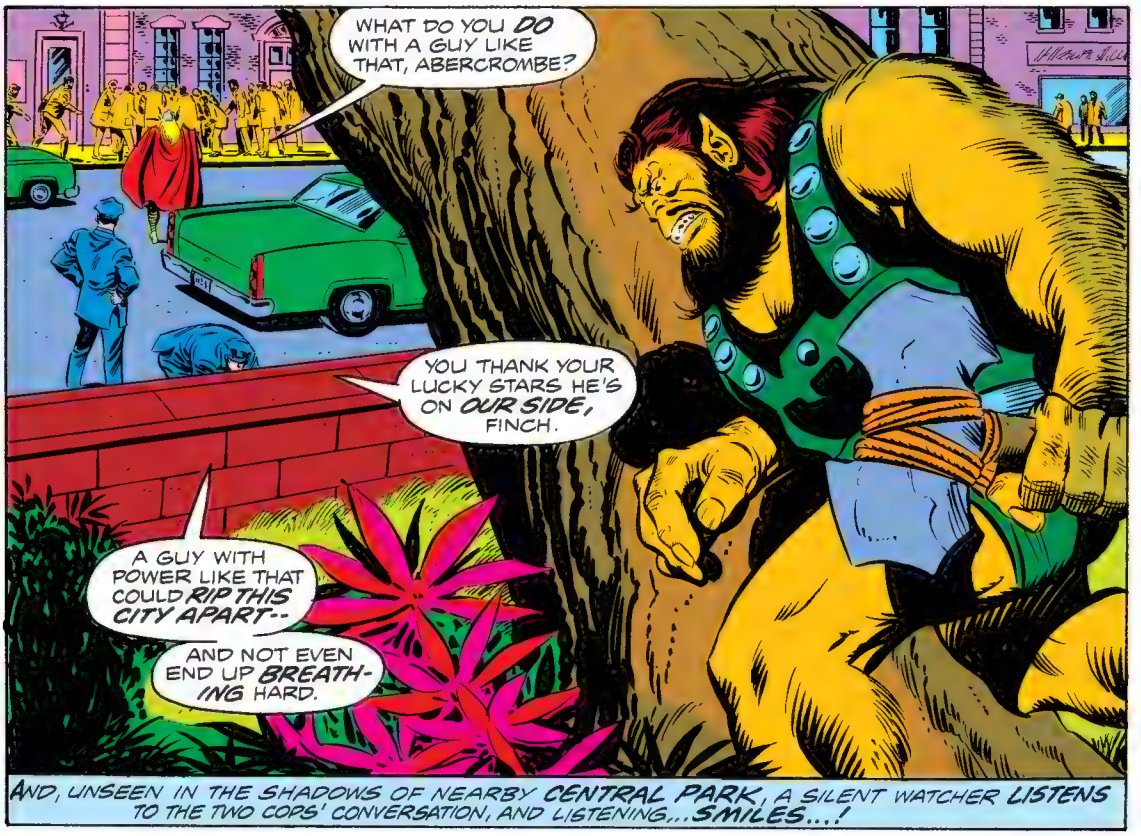

SMILING, DR. DONALD BLAKE BEGINS A REPLY--
EEEEEEEE
RRRR
POW
KRAK
POLICE
--BUT, BEFORE HE CAN SPEAK--
KRAK
KAPOW
C'MON, C'MON! THE FUZZ-MOBILE IS GAININ' ON US, YA CREEP!
KEEP THIS TON OF JUNK MOVIN'--
--BEFORE THOSE COPS CATCH UP, AND WE START FIGHTIN' FER REAL!
OOOOOHHH--FOOF!, LOOK OUT--
THAT WOMAN--SHE'S BEEN HIT BY A STRAY BULLET!
KRAK
SHE'S BEEN GRAZED, DON--BUT I CAN HANDLE IT ALONE.
YOU'VE GOT TO STOP THOSE GUN-MEN--
BEFORE THEY ACCIDENTALLY HURT SOMEONE ELSE!
I'LL DO WHAT I CAN.
FOR ANY OTHER MAN, THAT STATEMENT WOULD BE PURELY PERFUNCTORY, BUT FOR DON BLAKE, A PROMISE OF HELP MADE BY A LAME SURGEON--
--MEANS THE SURE INVOLVEMENT--
--OF DONALD BLAKE'S OTHER IDENTITY--
THE GOD OF THUNDER, THOR!


YONDER VILLAINS DOTH RUN A RAMPAGE THROUGH THIS CITY!
METHINKS THEY MUST BE STOPPED QUICKLY--
--AND MY MALLET MJOLNIR MAY WELL DO THE DEED!
PRONNG!
THE AXLE!
WHAT HAPPENED TO THE--
SPABOOM!
THOR... IT WAS THOR...!
'CAUSE OF HIM, WE CRASHED INTO THE PARK WALL--!

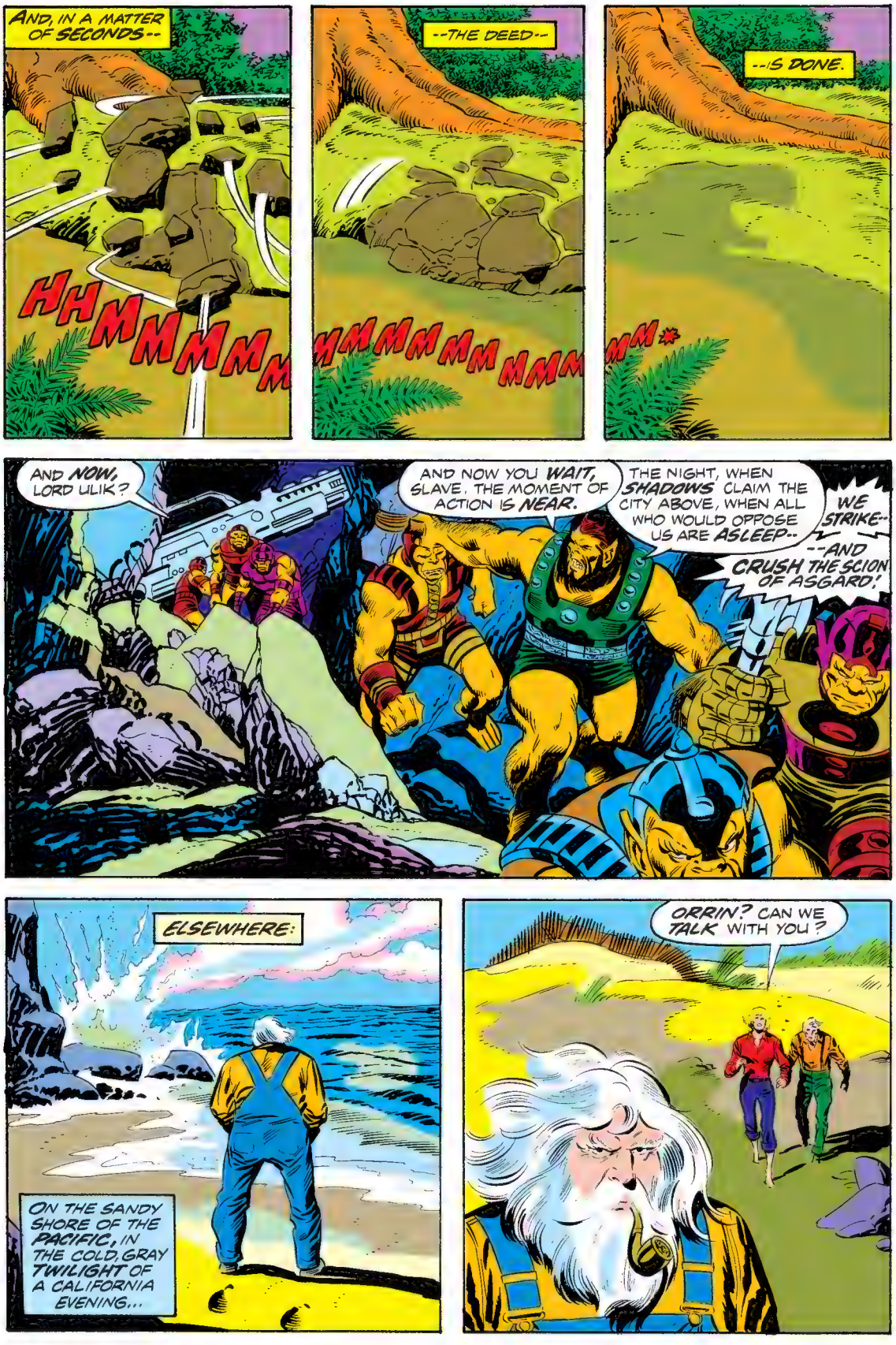

POW
'CAUSE OF HIM-- WE GOTTA FIGHT THE COPS!
KAPOW
YA CREEP! YA FILTHY CREEP!
KRAKA KRAK!
YOU'RE GONNA GET IT, PAL! YOU'RE GONNA BE A SWISS CHEESE--!
SPONG
SPING
SPINNG
OKAY, PAL. OKAY. SO YOU'RE PRETTY SWIFT WITH THAT HAMMER. SO YOU CAN BOUNCE BULLETS BY JUST SWINGIN' THAT MALLET. SO, OKAY.
I AIN'T NO SUPER-HERO, BUT I WUZ A CONTENDER FOR THE HEAVY-WEIGHT TITLE IN '66--
--AND THAT MAKES ME A YEEEEEOOOWW!
NO! HEY, LISTEN--NO! DON'T DO THAT! DON'T--!
KABONK
KABONK

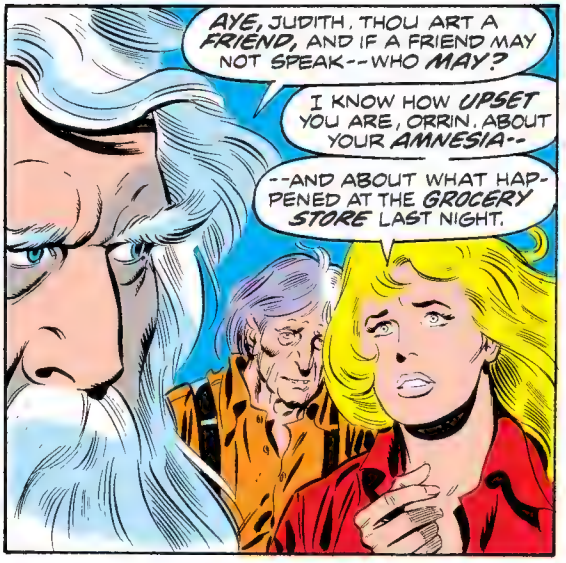

DID I JUST SEE WHAT I THINK I JUST SAW? I MEAN, DID YOU REALLY DO THAT?
DOST THOU DOUBT THE EVIDENCE OF THINE EYES, MORTAL?
NO--I MEAN YEAH--I MEAN--
HECK, THAT WAS THE MOST INCREDIBLE THING I'VE EVER SEEN! AND YOU DID IT ALL IN A MINUTE--
A CRUMMY SIXTY SECONDS!


'TWOULD HAVE BEEN DONE WITH GREATER SPEED... BUT IN TRUTH, MY MIND WAS ON OTHER THINGS.


WHAT DO YOU DO WITH A GUY LIKE THAT, ABERCROMBE?
YOU THANK YOUR LUCKY STARS HE'S ON OUR SIDE, FINCH.
A GUY WITH POWER LIKE THAT COULD RIP THIS CITY APART--
AND NOT EVEN END UP BREATHING HARD.
AND, UNSEEN IN THE SHADOWS OF NEARBY CENTRAL PARK, A SILENT WATCHER LISTENS TO THE TWO COPS' CONVERSATION, AND LISTENING... SMILES...!

CHAPTER TWO:
"INTERLUDE!"
ALL IS AS WE WERE TOLD, MY MINIONS.
THE TIME IS RIPE FOR MY PLAN--RIPE INDEED!
ON THIS OCCASION, ULIK WILL NOT FAIL!
SHALL WE CLOSE THE TUNNEL, MASTER?
AYE, WE'VE SEEN ENOUGH FOR NOW. ACTIVATE THE EARTH-DRILL. I WANT THE SURFACE RETURNED TO ITS PREVIOUS STATE--
"--THAT NONE MAY KNOW THAT WE LURK BELOW, THAT WE WATCH...AND THAT WE WAIT."
BRUUUUU
crackle


AND, IN A MATTER OF SECONDS--
HHMMMMMM
--THE DEED--
MMMMMMMMM
--IS DONE.
MM
AND NOW, LORD ULIK?
AND NOW YOU WAIT, SLAVE. THE MOMENT OF ACTION IS NEAR.
THE NIGHT, WHEN SHADOWS CLAIM THE CITY ABOVE, WHEN ALL WHO WOULD OPPOSE US ARE ASLEEP--
WE STRIKE--
--AND CRUSH THE SCION OF ASGARD!
ELSEWHERE:
ON THE SANDY SHORE OF THE PACIFIC, IN THE COLD, GRAY TWILIGHT OF A CALIFORNIA EVENING...
ORRIN? CAN WE TALK WITH YOU?

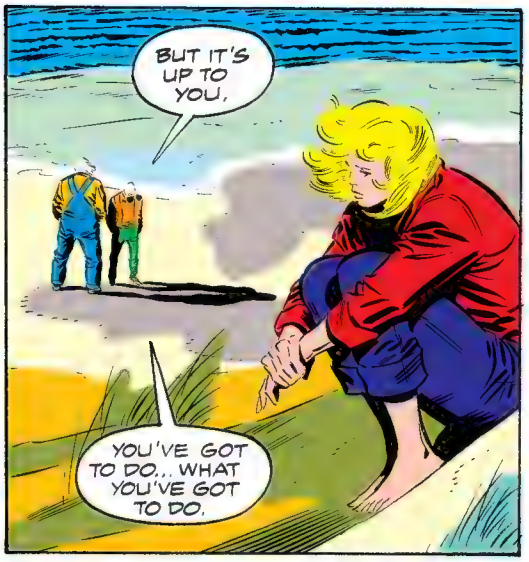

AYE, JUDITH, THOU ART A FRIEND, AND IF A FRIEND MAY NOT SPEAK--WHO MAY?
I KNOW HOW UPSET YOU ARE, ORRIN, ABOUT YOUR AMNESIA--
--AND ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED AT THE GROCERY STORE LAST NIGHT.

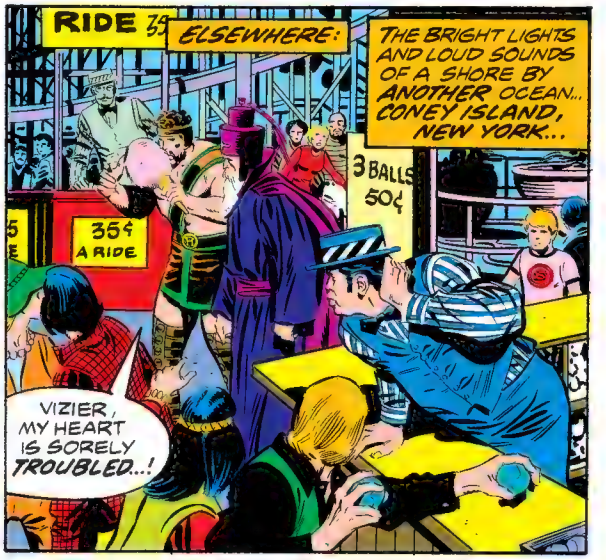
BUT, DON'T YOU SEE-- THE WAY YOU THREW THOSE MEN AROUND, IT WAS LIKE-- YOU HAD SOME SORT OF POWER!*
THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO NEED HELP, ORRIN--
AND WITH YOUR POWER, YOU CAN HELP THEM!
NAY, 'TIS NOT MY WAY, CHILD,
*LAST ISSUE.--LEN.

MR. HEATH, YOU TALK TO HIM. MAYBE YOU CAN MAKE HIM UNDERSTAND.
ORRIN...

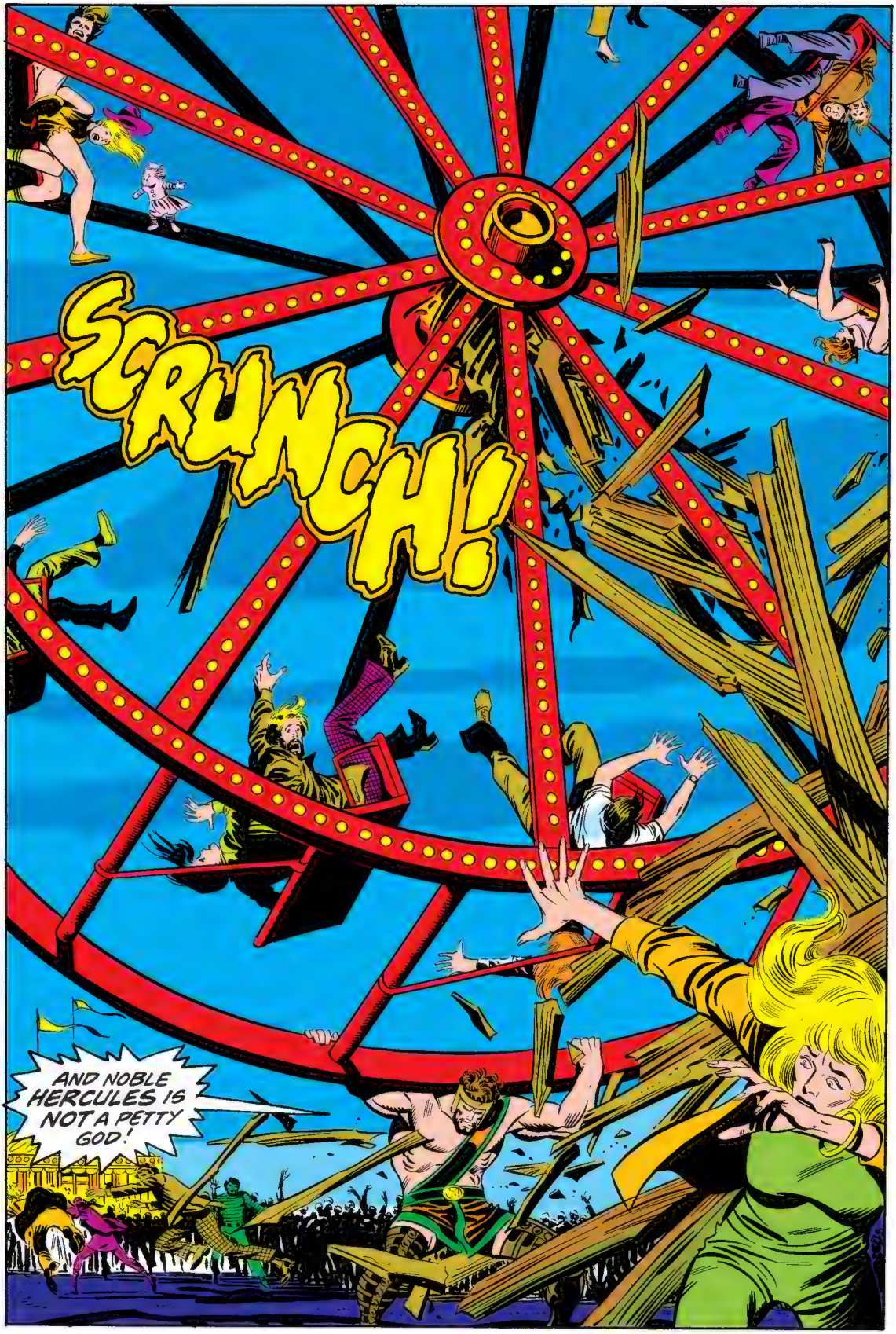
WHEN YOU CAME TO US, LOST AND WITHOUT YOUR MEMORY, WE HELPED YOU.
PEOPLE HAVE TO HELP EACH OTHER, ORRIN. THAT'S WHAT MAKES US MEN.

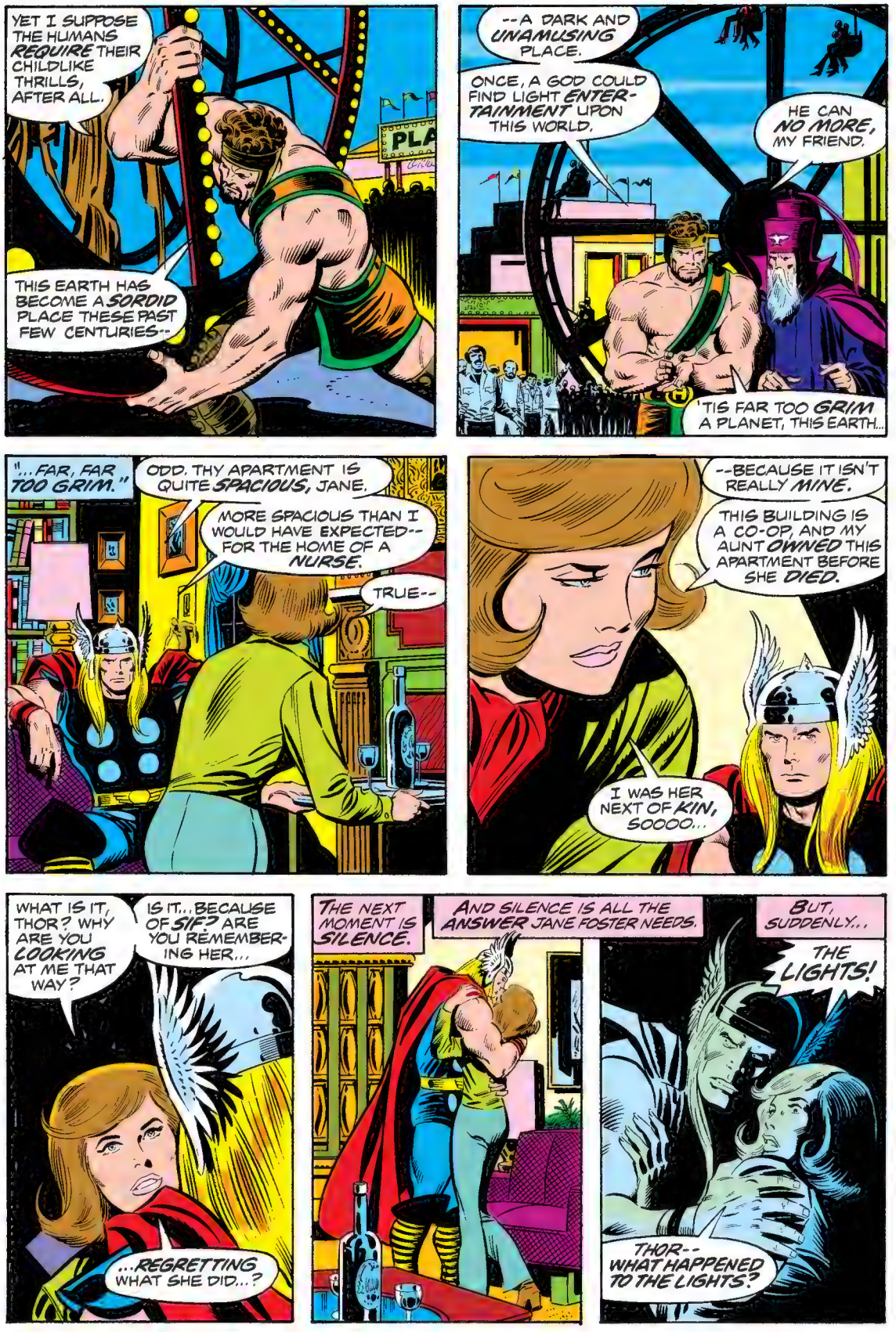
"YOU'RE STRONG... STRONGER 'N ANYBODY I'VE EVER SEEN. WHY, WITH THAT STRENGTH, YOU COULD HELP THE WORLD..."


BUT IT'S UP TO YOU.
YOU'VE GOT TO DO... WHAT YOU'VE GOT TO DO.

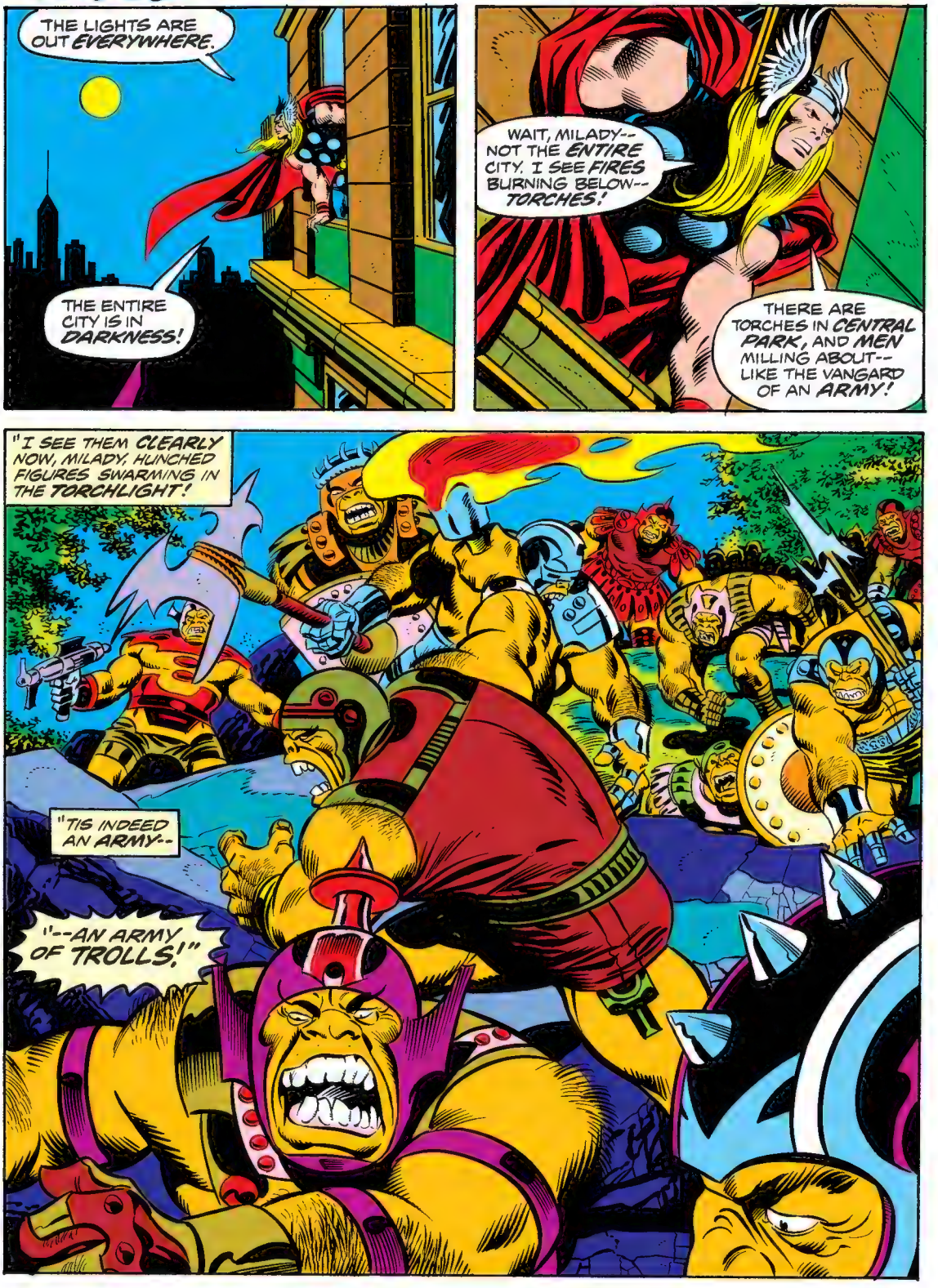

RIDE
ELSEWHERE:
THE BRIGHT LIGHTS AND LOUD SOUNDS OF A SHORE BY ANOTHER OCEAN... CONEY ISLAND, NEW YORK...
3 BALLS 50¢
35¢ A RIDE
VIZIER, MY HEART IS SORELY TROUBLED...!

WHY SO, HERCULES? HAST THOU NOT COMPLETED THY TASK, IN AIDING THE LADY SIF TO REVIVE JANE FOSTER?
OR ART THOU AFRAID OF THE WRATH OF KAMO THARNN, HE WHOSE MYSTIC RUNE-STAFF THOU DID STEAL FOR USE IN THAT REVIVAL?
NAY, I FEAR NO GOD OR MAN, VIZIER. MY TROUBLE IS OF ANOTHER NATURE--
FOR, I WONDER IF 'TWERE RIGHT THAT SIF SHOULD GIVE HER IDENTITY, TO SUPPLY LIFE TO JANE FOSTER'S SOUL.*
TRUE, SIF DOTH STILL SURVIVE-- BUT SHE IS WITH-IN THE MORTAL FEMALE, AND I--
* LAST ISSUE. --LEN.
KRUNCH!
THE WHEEL! IT'S-- BREAKING--!
BY MY SOUL!
WILL THESE MORTALS NEVER LEARN?
ONLY A CHILD OR A MADMAN WOULD TRUST HIS LIFE TO SUCH A DEVICE--YET TRUST, THESE MORTALS DO!
I'VE AN IDEA TO LET THEM FALL--
--BUT 'TWOULD BE A PETTY JUSTICE--

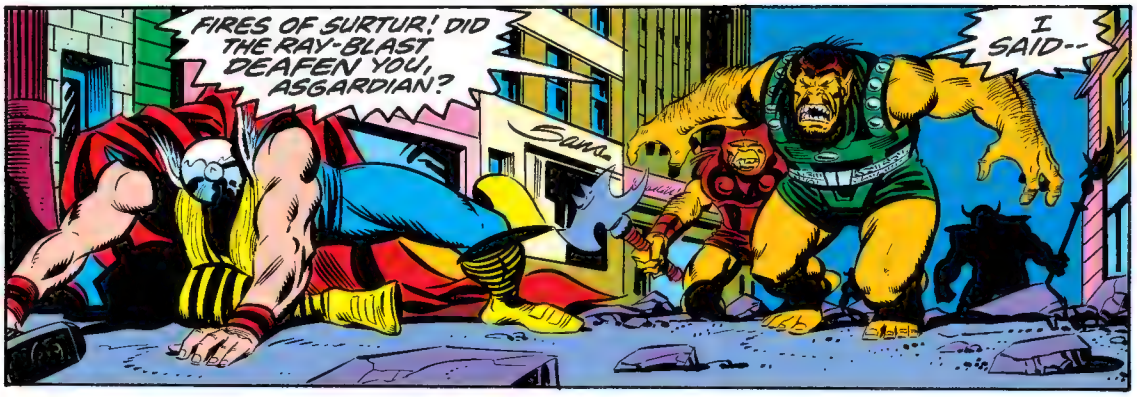

SCRUNCH!
AND NOBLE HERCULES IS NOT A PETTY GOD!

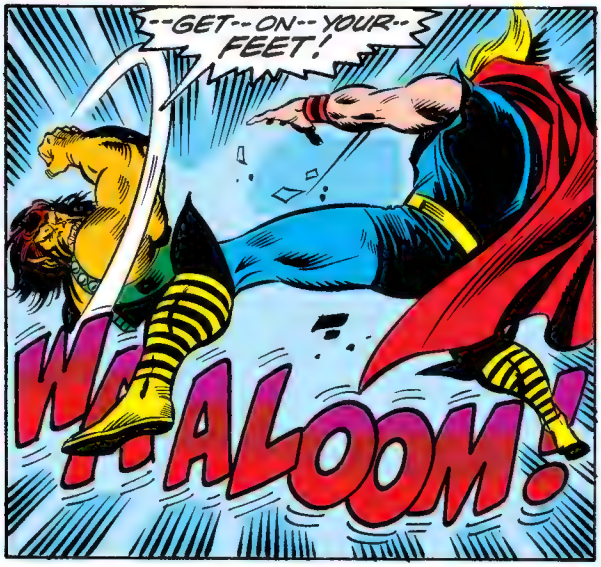

YET I SUPPOSE THE HUMANS REQUIRE THEIR CHILDLIKE THRILLS, AFTER ALL.
THIS EARTH HAS BECOME A SORDID PLACE THESE PAST FEW CENTURIES--
--A DARK AND UNAMUSING PLACE.
ONCE, A GOD COULD FIND LIGHT ENTERTAINMENT UPON THIS WORLD.
HE CAN NO MORE, MY FRIEND.
'TIS FAR TOO GRIM A PLANET, THIS EARTH...
"...FAR, FAR TOO GRIM."
ODD. THY APARTMENT IS QUITE SPACIOUS, JANE.
MORE SPACIOUS THAN I WOULD HAVE EXPECTED-- FOR THE HOME OF A NURSE.
TRUE--
--BECAUSE IT ISN'T REALLY MINE.
THIS BUILDING IS A CO-OP, AND MY AUNT OWNED THIS APARTMENT BEFORE SHE DIED.
I WAS HER NEXT OF KIN, SOOOO...
WHAT IS IT, THOR? WHY ARE YOU LOOKING AT ME THAT WAY?
IS IT... BECAUSE OF SIF? ARE YOU REMEMBERING HER...
...REGRETTING WHAT SHE DID...?
THE NEXT MOMENT IS SILENCE.
AND SILENCE IS ALL THE ANSWER JANE FOSTER NEEDS.
BUT, SUDDENLY...
THE LIGHTS!
THOR-- WHAT HAPPENED TO THE LIGHTS?

CHAPTER THREE: NIGHT WAR!

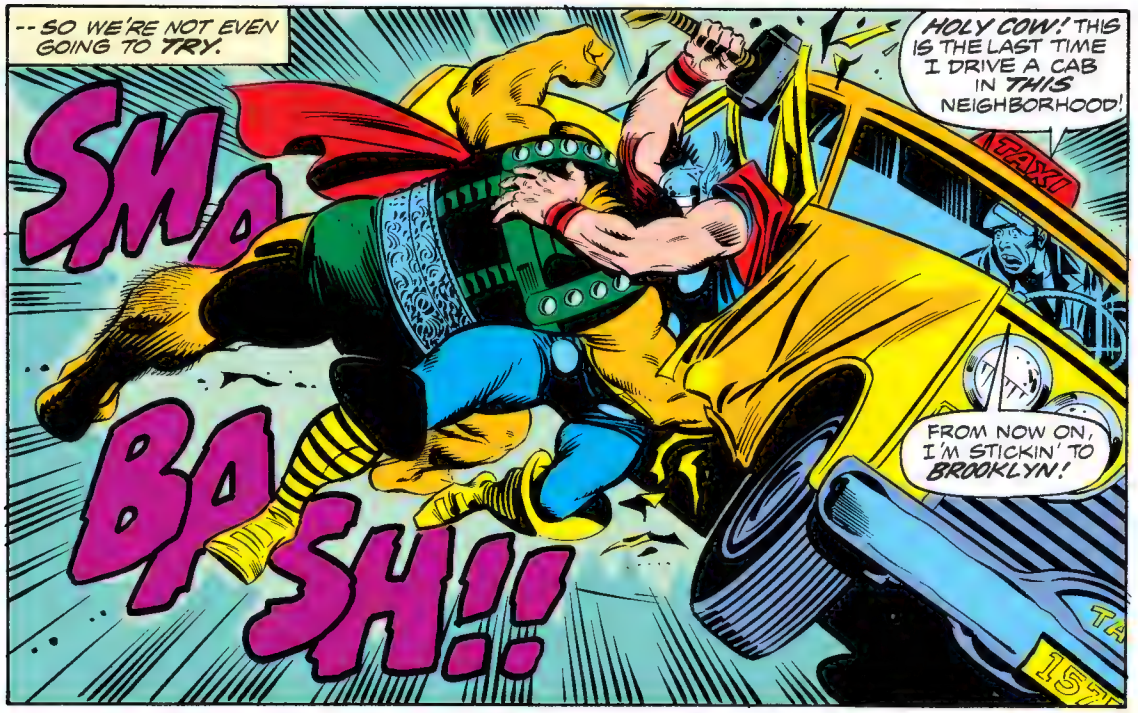

THE LIGHTS ARE OUT EVERYWHERE.
THE ENTIRE CITY IS IN DARKNESS!
WAIT, MILADY-- NOT THE ENTIRE CITY. I SEE FIRES BURNING BELOW-- TORCHES!
THERE ARE TORCHES IN CENTRAL PARK, AND MEN MILLING ABOUT-- LIKE THE VANGARD OF AN ARMY!
"I SEE THEM CLEARLY NOW, MILADY, HUNCHED FIGURES SWARMING IN THE TORCHLIGHT!
"TIS INDEED AN ARMY--
"--AN ARMY OF TROLLS!"

TROLLS? HERE IN NEW YORK? BUT WHY?
WHAT CAN THEY POSSIBLY WANT?
THEY WANT WHAT THEY ALWAYS WANT, JANE--
--WAR!
IF EVER A RACE WERE BRED TO VIOLENCE AND TREACHERY--
--TO DESTRUCTION AND DECEIT--
--SUCH IS THE RACE CALLED TROLL!
BUT, BY ASGARD, THEY WILL NOT WAR AGAIN!
THEY WILL NOT--
UNNNHHHH
ZAZZCT!
THROM!
ON YOUR FEET, WARRIOR.
I WANT YOU STANDING WHEN I DEFEAT YOU.


FIRES OF SURTUR! DID THE RAY-BLAST DEAFEN YOU, ASGARDIAN?
I SAID--


--GET-- ON-- YOUR-- FEET!
WHALOOM!

DEAR READER, WE'VE PONDERED LONG AND HARD, AND WE'VE HAD TO FACE THE FACT:
73 ST.
THERE'S NOT MUCH WE CAN SAY ABOUT WHAT HAPPENS NEXT--


--SO WE'RE NOT EVEN GOING TO TRY.
SMA
BA SH!!
HOLY COW! THIS IS THE LAST TIME I DRIVE A CAB IN THIS NEIGHBORHOOD!
TAXI
FROM NOW ON, I'M STICKIN' TO BROOKLYN!

IF IT AIN'T THE MUGGERS WHO GETCHA IN THIS TOWN--
--IT'S THE CRAZY SUPER-HEROES!
THIS PLACE IS SUICIDE!
THE HUMAN SPEAKS TRUTH, THOR! TO RESIST ULIK IS TO COURT DEATH!
RRIPPPP
I CAN REND THE EARTH--
AND I CAN CRUSH IT!
CROM!
YET STILL, KNOWING MY POWER--THOU DOTH PERSIST!
ART THOU MAD, TROLL? HOW MANY TIMES MUST WE FIGHT, AS WE'VE FOUGHT BEFORE*, BEFORE THOU WILL ADMIT DEFEAT--
*IN THOR #210 & 211, TO NAME TWO. --LEN.
--AND BOW THY HEAD IN SURRENDER?!
I'LL NEVER SURRENDER, THOR! NEVER!
I WAS BORN TO CONQUER --THIS WORLD AND MY OWN--
--AND CONQUER THEM I WILL, WITH THE AID OF A GOD OF THUNDER!
MYSTERIOUS WORDS--

--AND IF YOU'RE AS CURIOUS ABOUT THEIR MEANING AS WE INTEND FOR YOU TO BE, THEN FOLLOW THESE THREE TROLLS WHILE THEY ENTER THE LOBBY OF A CERTAIN CO-OP APARTMENT BUILDING--!
BUSY BATTLING ULIK, THOR IS UNAWARE OF WHAT'S HAPPENING HERE.
THAT'S AS IT SHOULD BE.
FIRST THE LIGHTS... NOW MONSTERS... OHHHH...
AFTER ALL...
...THAT'S WHAT ULIK PLANNED.
12 J
NOK NOK
THOR...?

BWAMM!
ASGARDIAN, YOU TEMPT ME. IF I DIDN'T NEED YOU WHOLE, I SWEAR I'D TEAR YOU LIMB FROM--
MASTER... LORD ULIK! WE'VE DONE AS YOU COMMANDED..
EH?
THE GIRL IS OURS!
SPLENDID!
WELL, THUNDER GOD--?
"ARE YOU PREPARED TO CONTINUE OUR COMBAT--AT THE COST OF THIS WOMAN'S LIFE?
"I SEE YOU'RE NOT.
"I EXPECTED AS MUCH... YOU PITIABLE FOOL."
NOW, THOR, YOU WILL LISTEN--
LISTEN... AND OBEY...!
TO BE... CONTINUED...?
NEXT ISSUE:
DOOM BENEATH THE EARTH!

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THE MIGHTY
THOR®
TROLL VS. THUNDER GOD UPON THE SEA OF DEATH!
BATTLE IN THE WORLD BELOW!

Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE MIGHTY THOR!™

GERRY CONWAY AUTHOR * JOHN BUSCEMA ARTIST * JOE SINNOTT FINISHED ART * JOHN COSTANZA, letterer / DON WARFIELD, colorist * LEN WEIN EDITOR

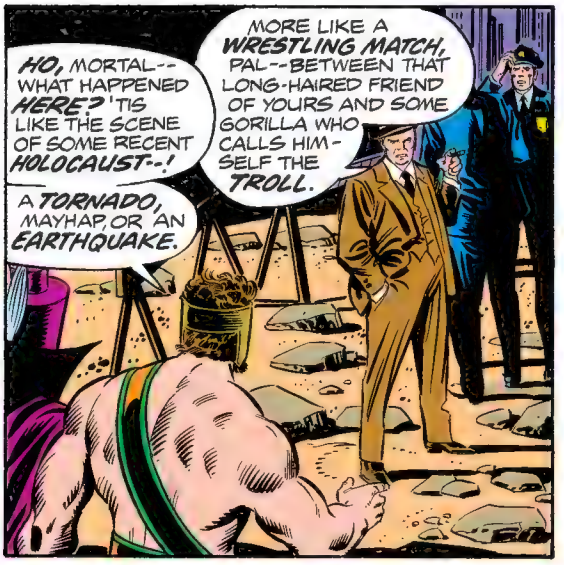
NIGHT OF THE TROLL!

WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE: IN OUR LAST INSTALLMENT, WE WITNESSED THE INVASION OF MANHATTAN BY ULIK AND HIS ARMY OF TROLLS. WE WATCHED AS THOR RESISTED ULIK'S ATTACK--AND WE WATCHED THE THUNDER GOD'S SUBSEQUENT DEFEAT, WHEN ULIK'S MINION'S KIDNAPPED THOR'S BELOVED, JANE FOSTER.
NOW, WE OBSERVE THE AFTERMATH--AS A VICTORIOUS ULIK LEADS HIS CONQUERED FOE INTO THE DARKNESS BENEATH THE EARTH--
--THE DARKNESS WHICH THE TROLLS CALL HOME.

CHAPTER ONE:
THE RIVER AT THE HEART OF THE WORLD!
YOUR SILENCE SURPRISES ME, THUNDER GOD. HAS DEFEAT TAKEN YOUR TONGUE?
HAVE YOU LOST YOUR CURIOSITY AS WELL AS YOUR HONOR?
'TWAS NO DISHONOR IN THIS DEFEAT, ULIK--FOR 'TWAS DEFEAT CAUSED BY BASE TREACHERY.
TREACHERY? ARE YOU CLAIMING I STOLE MY VICTORY, THUNDER GOD? THAT MY TRIUMPH WAS NOT DESERVED?
'TIS NO CLAIM, TROLL --'TIS PLAIN REALITY.
THOU DOST KNOW THE LIMIT OF THY STRENGTH-- AND I WILL REMIND THEE, THOU HAST BEEN BEATEN BY ME THRICE BEFORE. *
*NO-PRIZE TO THE READER WHO TELLS US WHEN. --LEN
ENOUGH! I WON'T LISTEN TO YOUR LIES, ASGARDIAN!
IF ANYONE EVER STOLE A VICTORY, IT WAS YOU!
I AM ULIK, THUNDER GOD--
BOOM!
ULIK, THE INVINCIBLE!

THOU ART ALSO ULIK THE QUICK-TEMPERED, TROLL. 'TIS A FAILING WHICH WILL BETRAY THEE SOME DAY.
PERHAPS, THUNDER GOD--BUT BY THAT DAY, YOU'LL BE LONG DEAD.
WE'VE WASTED ENOUGH TIME ON THESE CHILDISH GAMES. I'VE A WORLD TO CONQUER--
--AND YOU HAVE A WOMAN'S LIFE TO SAVE.
THOR'S REPLY IS HIS SILENCE, AS HE QUIETLY FOLLOWS THE HULKING TROLL INTO THE DEPTHS BENEATH MANHATTAN ISLAND, TO A DESTINY WHOSE NATURE HE CANNOT GUESS...
...AND COULD NEVER IMAGINE.
FOR ALMOST A FULL HOUR, THE TROLLS PROCEED DEEPER AND DEEPER INTO THE CATACOMBS, THROUGH WINDING TUNNELS AND ARCHING CAVERNS.
AT FIRST, THE SOUND OF RUNNING WATER IS FAINT, ILLUSORY; THEN SLOWLY, IT GROWS LOUDER... AND BECOMES, AT LAST, THE ROAR OF A MIGHTY SUBTERRANEAN RIVER...
A LAST TURN IS TAKEN, A LAST TUNNEL IS DESCENDED... AND THEN...

A RIVER HERE, BENEATH THE EARTH? I HAVE HEARD OF SUCH THINGS, BUT NEVER HAVE I SEEN ONE.
CONSIDER IT AN EDUCATION, THUNDER GOD.
SO I SHALL, TROLL. BUT TELL ME THIS--
--WHERE WILL THIS RIVER TAKE US?
TO THE VERY HEART OF THIS PLANET, ASGARDIAN--TO THE CORE OF THE WORLD!
AND THERE--THERE YOU WILL LEARN THE REASON BEHIND YOUR ABDUCTION--
THERE YOU WILL MEET ZOTARR--THE TROLL SUPREME!
MEANWHILE, FAR ABOVE, AN ANNOYED SERGEANT OF DETECTIVES SURVEYS THE SCENE OF THOR'S RECENT BATTLE--AND EMITS A ROAR OF DISGUST...
NUTS!
WHY CAN'T THEY HAVE THEIR BLASTED FREE-FOR-ALLS IN CHICAGO, FOR PETE'S SAKE?
WHY DO THEY ALWAYS HAVE THEM IN MY PRECINCT? WHY?
P.D


HO, MORTAL--WHAT HAPPENED HERE? 'TIS LIKE THE SCENE OF SOME RECENT HOLOCAUST--!
MORE LIKE A WRESTLING MATCH, PAL--BETWEEN THAT LONG-HAIRED FRIEND OF YOURS AND SOME GORILLA WHO CALLS HIMSELF THE TROLL.
A TORNADO, MAYHAP, OR AN EARTHQUAKE.

WHAT'S THIS? CAN IT BE THOU DOST MEAN THE THUNDER GOD, THOR?
THAT'S EXACTLY WHO I MEAN, BRISTLE-BEARD.
EVER SINCE I FIRST RAN INTO YOU TWO, I'VE BEEN PLAYING PICK-UP-STICKS WITH THE MESS YOU JERKS--

HOLD! I ASKED THEE A QUESTION, MORTAL--AND I DEMAND AN ANSWER!
WHAT HAPPENED HERE? AND HOW DID IT INVOLVE THE THE ASGARDIAN?
HERCULES! BEWARE THY STRENGTH!
YEAH--WHAT 'RE YOU TRYIN' TO DO--? KILL ME--?

RELUCTANTLY, THE SON OF ZEUS RETURNS THE STARTLED SERGEANT BLUMKINN TO THE SIDEWALK, AND WHEN BLUMKINN HAS CAUGHT HIS BREATH, AND HAS RELATED THE EVENING'S EVENTS...
FORGIVE ME FOR MY ANGER, HUMAN--BUT THOU MUST UNDERSTAND MY CONCERN.
THOU HAS BUT LATELY RECEIVED A TERRIBLE SHOCK--

--FOR 'TWAS ONLY A FEW DAYS PAST WHEN THE GODDESS SIF SACRIFICED HER EXISTENCE THAT THOR'S BELOVED JANE FOSTER MIGHT NOT DIE.*
METHINKS THE GOD OF THUNDER HAS NOT YET REDISCOVERED FROM THAT AMAZEMENT. IN TRUTH--
*IT HAPPENED IN THOR #236. --LEN.

--I FEAR FOR HIS LIFE.

WHILE HERCULES STARES GLOOMILY INTO THE DARK AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL, WE'LL LOOK ELSEWHERE, WHERE THE SUN STILL SHINES:
SAN GERALDO, CALIFORNIA: NOT FAR FROM THE COAST, A SMALL FARMING COMMUNITY SPECIALIZING IN THE GROWTH OF GRAPES.
GRAPES
NORMALLY, IT'S A QUIET, SLEEPY TOWN SEVENTY-EIGHT MILES FROM THE MEXICAN BORDER... A TOWN KNOWN FOR ITS PRODUCTION OF FINE WINES...
...AS WELL AS FOR ITS SIX-YEAR OLD GRAPE PICKERS STRIKE.
NOW AND THEN, THE STRIKE ERUPTS INTO VIOLENCE.
IT IS ABOUT TO ERUPT INTO VIOLENCE NOW.
YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT I WANT, CONNERS? NO DEATHS--JUST A FEW BROKEN BONES.
YOU'VE GOT IT, MR. COMBACH. I'VE TALKED TO THE BOYS--THEY UNDERSTAND.
WELL THEN--DO WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO, CONNERS--
--AND CALL ME AT THE HOUSE WHEN IT'S DONE.
ORRIN... I THINK THOSE PICKETERS ARE GOING TO HAVE TROUBLE.
SO 'TWOULD SEEM, JUDITH.
STOP THE CAR, PLEASE...

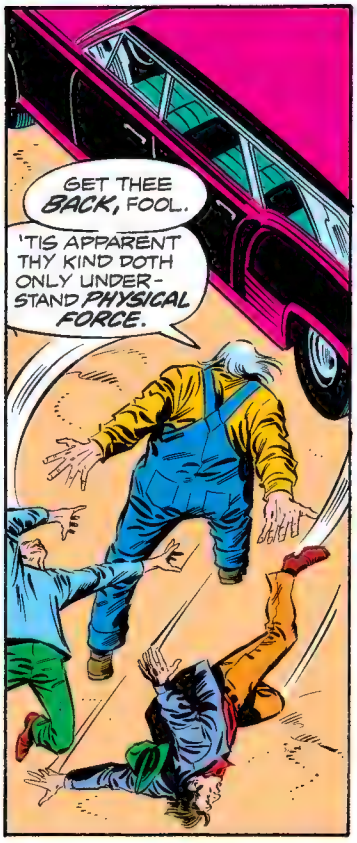
CHAPTER TWO: THE SONG OF BATTLE!

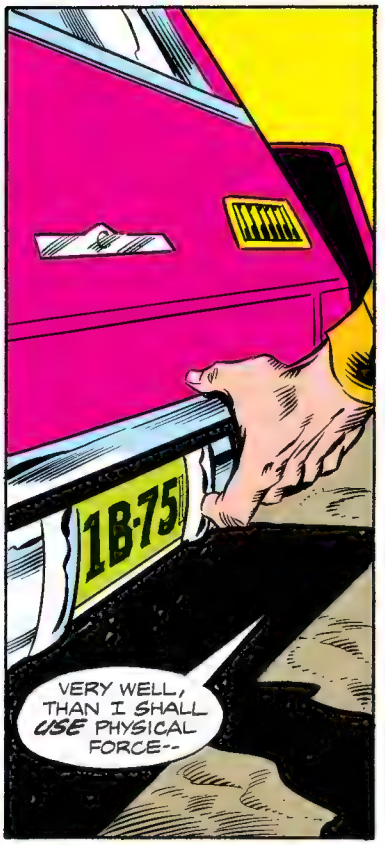
TOMAS CHAMARO IS A BRAVE AND LONELY MAN. FOR SIX LONG YEARS, HE'S FOUGHT A FIGHT HE KNOWS HE CANNOT WIN: A BATTLE IN WHICH THERE ARE OTHER WARRIORS, TRUE--
--WARRIORS WHO HAVE MUCH TO LOSE--
--BUT NOT SO MUCH TO LOSE AS TOMAS CHAMARO.
WE INTEND TO PICKET THIS FARM, SEÑOR CONNERS-- AND YOU CANNOT STOP US.
THAT'S WHERE YOU'RE WRONG, CHAMARO.

BODIES COLLIDE WITH STUNNING FORCE; FISTS CONNECT WITH JAWS, KNEES THRUST TOWARD GROINS; MEN CRY OUT WITH SUDDEN PAIN--
--THEN SWALLOW THE CRY--
--AND THROW THEMSELVES FORWARD INTO THE FRAY. FOR AN INSTANT THERE IS UNCONTROLLED FURY--

ENOUGH!
HEY-- WHAT--?!?
BROM!
BY MY SOUL-- ART THOU DEAF?
I WILL SEE AN END TO THIS MADNESS--
IMMEDIATELY!
YAAHHHHH!

HEY, WHO'S THE FAT GUY? WHAT'S HE THINK HE'S DOIN'?
I DON'T KNOW, AND I DON'T CARE! HE'S ONE'A CHAMARO'S BUNCH--SO GET 'IM!
YERKK!


GET THEE BACK, FOOL.
'TIS APPARENT THY KIND DOTH ONLY UNDER-STAND PHYSICAL FORCE.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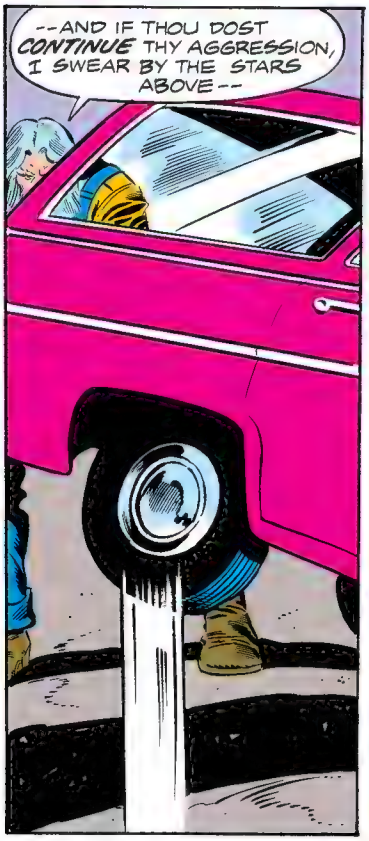
VERY WELL, THAN I SHALL USE PHYSICAL FORCE--

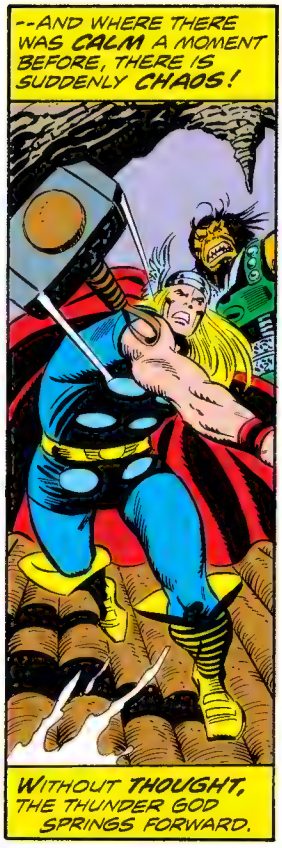

--AND IF THOU DOST CONTINUE THY AGGRESSION, I SWEAR BY THE STARS ABOVE--

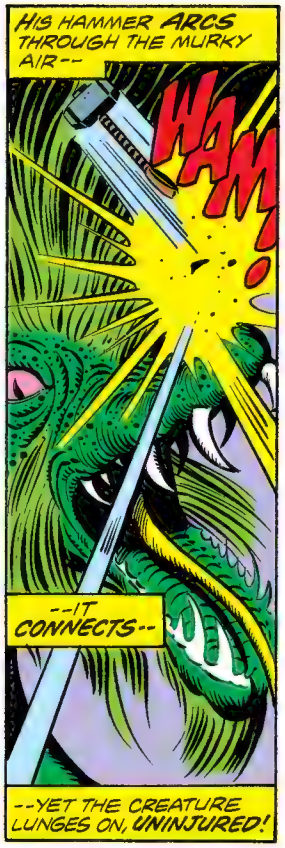
--I'LL SWAT THEE LIKE FLIES!
ORRIN, NO--! YOU DON'T REALIZE WHAT YOU'RE SAYING!
I DON'T BELIEVE IT-- I'VE GOTTA BE DREAMIN'--!
THAT'S IT FOR THE WINE THIS PLACE PUTS OUT! AS OF TODAY--
--I'M ON THE WAGON!

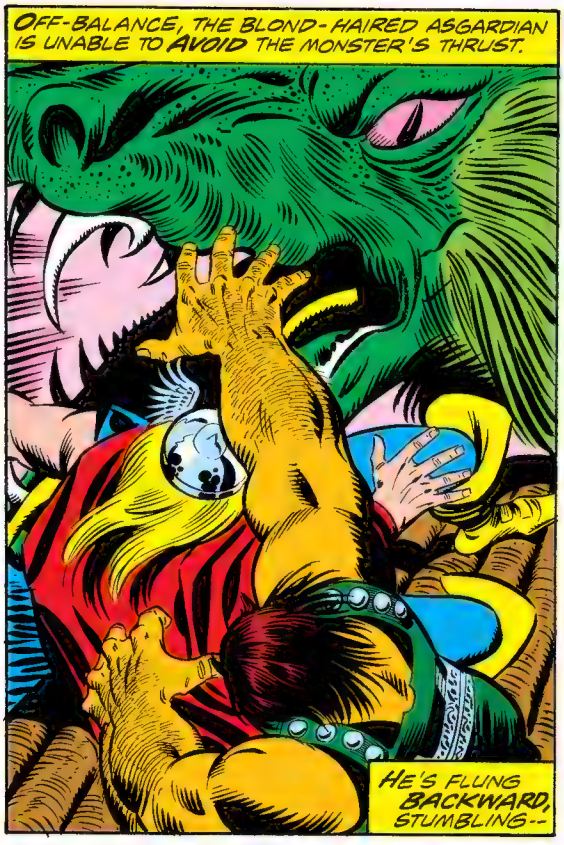
THIS ISN'T THE RIGHT WAY, ORRIN. WE CAN'T SOLVE ANYTHING WITH VIOLENCE.
WHEN I ASKED YOU TO GET INVOLVED WITH THE PROBLEMS OF THE WORLD, I MEANT FOR YOUR STRENGTH TO HELP PEOPLE*--
*SHOWN LAST ISSUE. --LEN.
--NOT HURT THEM.
I--I JUST DON'T THINK IT'S NECESSARY.
METHINKS THOU ART TOO TRUSTING, JUDITH, BUT IF IT WILL RELIEVE THEE--
I WILL DO AS THOU DOST SAY.
SLOWLY THEN, THE MAN JUDITH CALLS ORRIN, THE MAN WE KNOW TO BE THE AMNESIAC ODIN ALL-FATHER OF ASGARD, TURNS AWAY...
HE ISN'T ALONE.
COME, AMIGOS. I WANT TO SPEAK WITH THAT MAN...
YOU WANT WE SHOULD GO AFTER THEM, CONNERS?
NAH... THEY'LL BE BACK. AND WHEN THEY DO COME BACK ...WE'LL GET THEM.
WE'LL GET THEM GOOD.
WE'LL LEARN MORE ABOUT ORRIN AND JUDITH NEXT ISSUE; FOR NOW WE MUST RETURN TO OUR MAIN PROTAGONIST... THOR, GOD OF THUNDER!
I'D THOUGHT YOU'D HAVE GUESSED BY NOW, ASGARDIAN.
WHO IS THIS CREATURE THOU DOTH CALL ZOTARR, ULIK? AND WHY DOST THOU BRING ME TO HIM?
ZOTARR IS AN ALLY OF GIERRODUR, HE WHO CALLS HIMSELF KING OF THE TROLLS--!

GIERRODUR, WHO-- AFTER MY LAST BATTLE WITH YOU-- CONSIGNED ME TO THE DARKEST PITS OF OUR UNDERGROUND WORLD--
--WHERE I WAS TO SPEND ETERNITY STOKING THE FURNACE WHICH FED HEAT TO OUR MIGHTY FORGE.
HE CONSIDERED THIS A FIT PUNISHMENT FOR MY PLOT TO STEAL HIS KINGDOM--
"BUT, BY CONDEMNING ME--HE ULTIMATELY CONDEMNED HIMSELF!
"WHEN THE OPPORTUNITY AROSE TO ESCAPE, I SEIZED THE OPPORTUNITY-- KNOCKED OUT A GUARD--
"--AND FLED DEEPER INTO THE EARTH THAN ANY TROLL HAD EVER GONE BEFORE.
"AFTER MANY DAYS OF AIMLESS WANDERING, I CAME UPON A HIDDEN CAVERN FAR BELOW THOSE LEVELS INHABITED BY THE TROLLS OF GIERRODUR.
"THERE I DISCOVERED A LOST TRIBE OF TROLLS, WHO ACCEPTED ME AS THEIR LEADER AFTER I DISPOSED OF THEIR CHIEF.
"I ALSO DISCOVERED THIS RIVER..."
...WHICH WILL BRING US TO GIERRODUR, WHERE I WILL FINALLY TAKE MY REVENGE!
I THINK I UNDERSTAND.
THOU DOTH PLAN TO USE ME AGAINST THIS ZOTARR--
--WHILE I ATTACK THE TROLL-KING! EXACTLY, THOR.

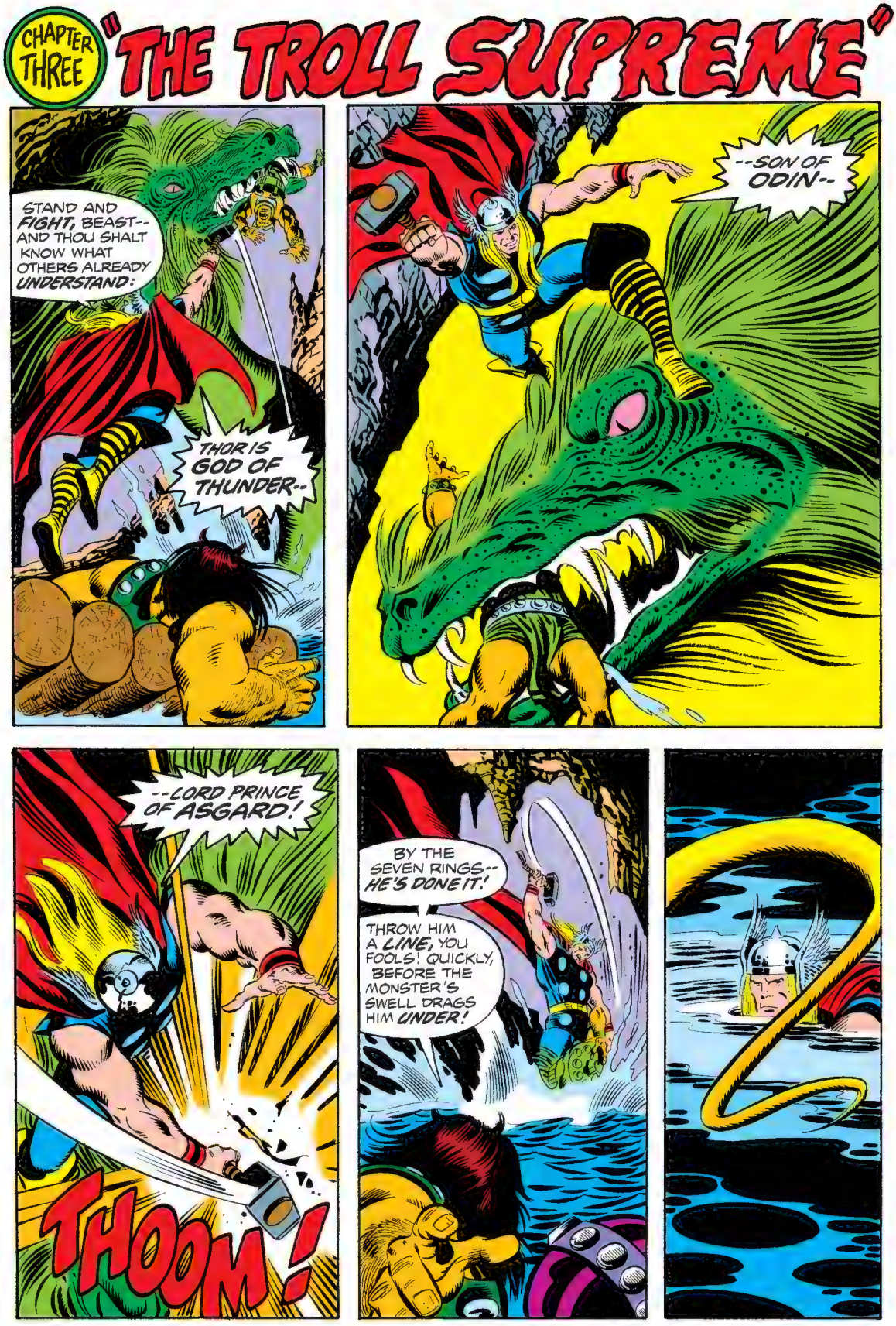
THOR OPENS HIS MOUTH TO RESPOND, BUT BEFORE HE CAN SPEAK, THERE IS A SNARLING ROAR--
AAARJO
--AN ERUPTION OF FETID WATER--
FIRES OF HELL! A SEA-DEMON--!


--AND WHERE THERE WAS CALM A MOMENT BEFORE, THERE IS SUDDENLY CHAOS!
WITHOUT THOUGHT, THE THUNDER GOD SPRINGS FORWARD.

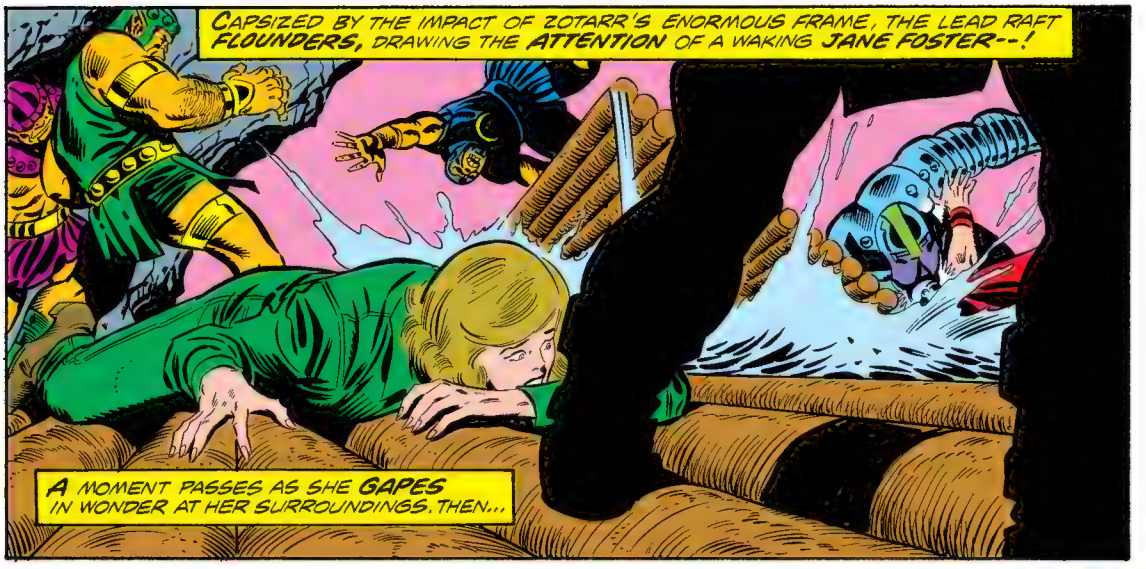

HIS HAMMER ARCS THROUGH THE MURKY AIR--
WAM!
--IT CONNECTS--
--YET THE CREATURE LUNGES ON, UNINJURED!


OFF-BALANCE, THE BLOND-HAIRED ASGARDIAN IS UNABLE TO AVOID THE MONSTER'S THRUST.
HE'S FLUNG BACKWARD, STUMBLING--

--BUT NOT FOR LONG.
GRIMLY, THE GOD OF THUNDER REGAINS HIS FEET.
AARROO
FOR, THE SON OF ODIN KNOWS--THE BATTLE HAS JUST BEGUN.

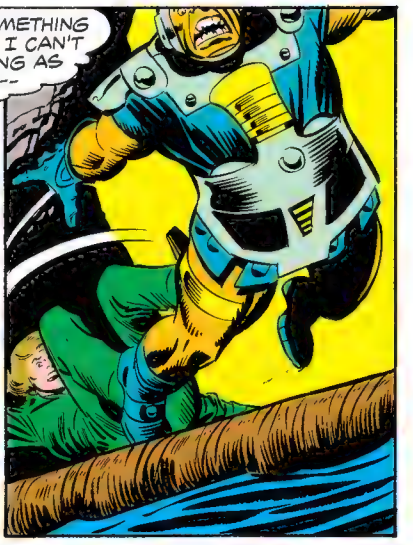

CHAPTER THREE
"THE TROLL SUPREME"
STAND AND FIGHT, BEAST-- AND THOU SHALT KNOW WHAT OTHERS ALREADY UNDERSTAND:
THOR IS GOD OF THUNDER--
--SON OF ODIN--
--LORD PRINCE OF ASGARD!
THOOM!
BY THE SEVEN RINGS-- HE'S DONE IT!
THROW HIM A LINE, YOU FOOLS! QUICKLY, BEFORE THE MONSTER'S SWELL DRAGS HIM UNDER!

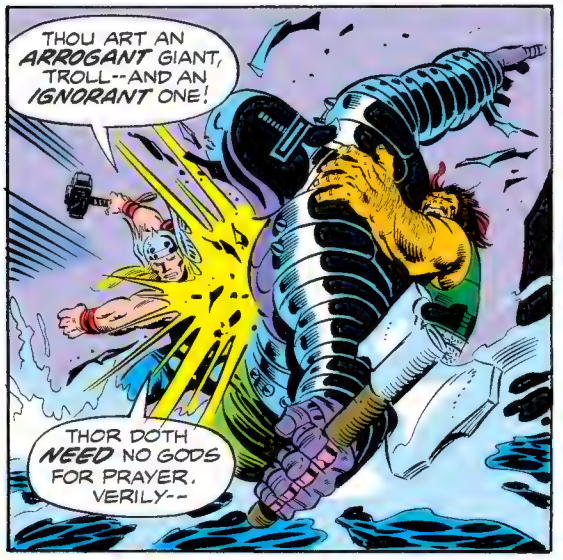
WELL DONE, ASGARDIAN! NEVER HAVE I SEEN SUCH FORM -- SUCH FIGHTING BRAVERY! WHY, 'TWAS ALMOST AS GREAT AS MY OWN--
SO-- YOU'VE CHOSEN TO RETURN, HAVE YOU, TRAITOR?
GIERRODUR! I HADN'T EXPECTED TO ENCOUNTER YOU SO SOON, TROLL-KING.
THAT IS OBVIOUS, PERFIDIOUS ONE. HOWEVER, YOU HAVE ENCOUNTERED ME.
IN POINT OF FACT, YOU ARE TRESPASSING ON LAND BELONGING TO MY KINGDOM.
TO REQUEST AN EXPLANATION WOULD BE SUPERFLUOUS--
--SINCE YOUR AMBITIONS HAVE ALREADY BEEN RECOGNIZED! ZOTARR, DISPOSE OF THIS TRAITOR AND HIS ACCOMPLICES--INCLUDING THAT BLOND-HAIRED DEVIL!
THOR!
IF YOU HAVE A GOD, PRAY TO HIM, BLOND-HAIR.
SOON--YOU WILL BE IN HIS ARMS!
BEWARE! THE GIANT JUMPS--
:UHHHHHH!:


CAPSIZED BY THE IMPACT OF ZOTARR'S ENORMOUS FRAME, THE LEAD RAFT FLOUNDERS, DRAWING THE ATTENTION OF A WAKING JANE FOSTER--!
A MOMENT PASSES AS SHE GAPES IN WONDER AT HER SURROUNDINGS. THEN...

THOR!
WE'RE IN SOME SORT OF CAVERN--! THESE CREATURES--I'VE HEARD THOR SPEAK OF THEM--

THEY'RE TROLLS!
I'VE GOT TO DO SOMETHING TO HELP THOR--BUT I CAN'T DO ANYTHING AS LONG AS I'M A PRISONER. SO--

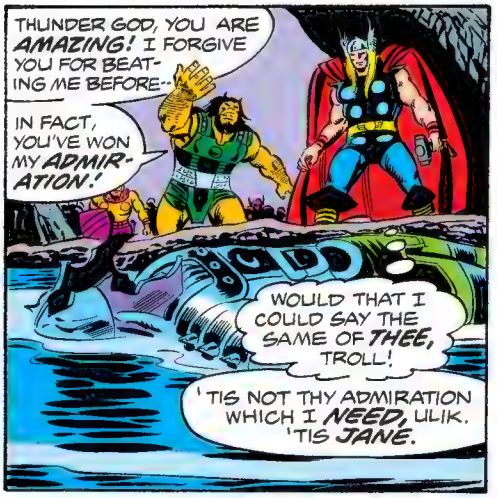


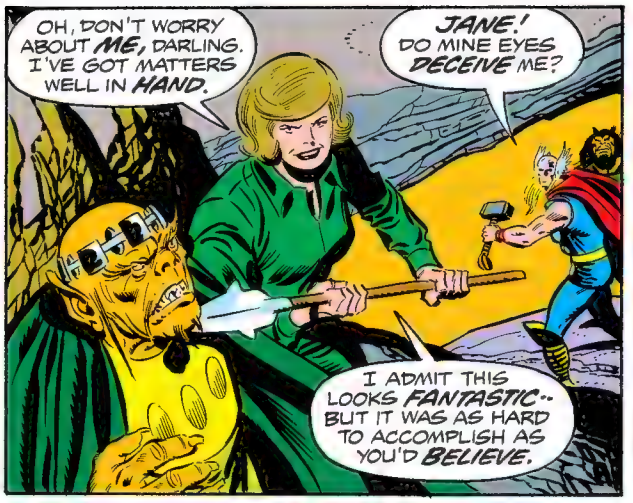

THOU ART AN ARROGANT GIANT, TROLL--AND AN IGNORANT ONE!
THOR DOTH NEED NO GODS FOR PRAYER. VERILY--

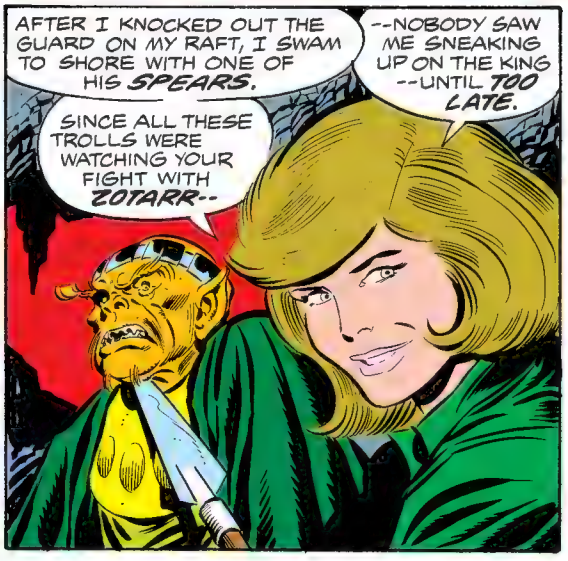
--THOR IS A GOD HIMSELF!
KEEP FIGHTING, ASGARDIAN! I'M ALMOST UPON HIM--!
THAMM!

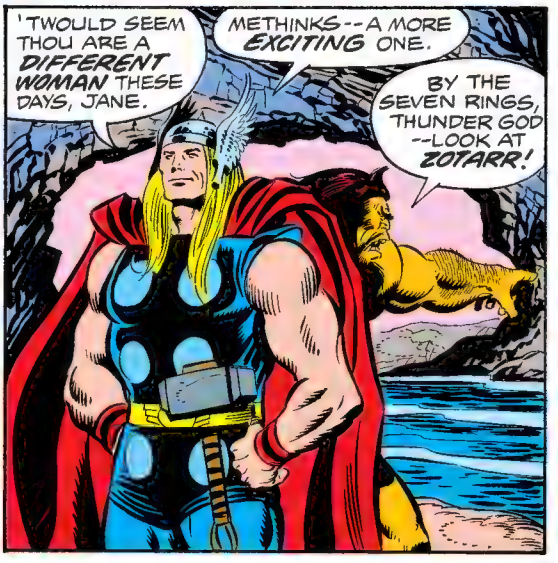
NO! THE FORCE OF YOUR HAMMER BLOW--STAGGERING HIM--! I CAN'T--
:AAARRR-RRHHH!:
YOU ARE AN INSECT, TRAITOR. AND DO YOU KNOW WHAT I DO WITH INSECTS?
I CRUSH THEM, LIKE--
HO, GIANT! HAST THOU SO SOON FORGOTTEN?
BOM
THOU DOST HAVE A QUARREL WITH ME AS WELL AS ULIK!
AND THOUGH ULIK HAS FALLEN, I STILL STAND--
SO TURN AND FACE ME, IF THOU DARE!
I DARE, BLOND-HAIR...
...FOR I AM ZOTARR THE TROLL-SUPREME!
WHAT AN ODD NAME: ZOTARR. 'TIS FULL OF PRE-TENSION.
METHINKS IT DOTH SUIT THEE, TROLL.

FOR THOU ART INDEED A PRETENSIOUS BUFFOON--AND DOST NEED A CUTTING DOWN TO SIZE!
BAK
ARRRRRHH! MY KNEES--!
BOK
THOU ART NOW A PERFECT HEIGHT, TROLL.
THY PAIN WAS FOR THE BEST, SINCE IT HAS GIVEN THEE A NEW PER-SPECTIVE ON LIFE.
LET THIS ALSO BE FOR THE BEST--AND MAY IT TEACH THEE TO ACCEPT THY STATUS--
--FOREVER!
SPADOOM!

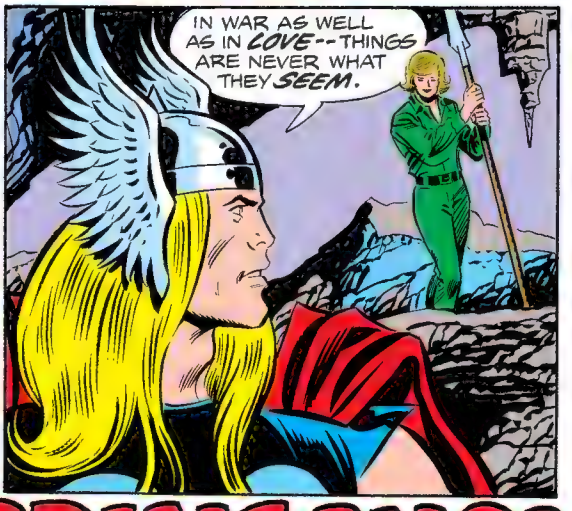

THUNDER GOD, YOU ARE AMAZING! I FORGIVE YOU FOR BEATING ME BEFORE--
IN FACT, YOU'VE WON MY ADMIRATION!
WOULD THAT I COULD SAY THE SAME OF THEE, TROLL!
'TIS NOT THY ADMIRATION WHICH I NEED, ULIK. 'TIS JANE.


OH, DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME, DARLING. I'VE GOT MATTERS WELL IN HAND.
JANE! DO MINE EYES DECEIVE ME?
I ADMIT THIS LOOKS FANTASTIC-- BUT IT WAS AS HARD TO ACCOMPLISH AS YOU'D BELIEVE.


AFTER I KNOCKED OUT THE GUARD ON MY RAFT, I SWAM TO SHORE WITH ONE OF HIS SPEARS.
--NOBODY SAW ME SNEAKING UP ON THE KING --UNTIL TOO LATE.
SINCE ALL THESE TROLLS WERE WATCHING YOUR FIGHT WITH ZOTARR--


'TWOULD SEEM THOU ARE A DIFFERENT WOMAN THESE DAYS, JANE.
METHINKS--A MORE EXCITING ONE.
BY THE SEVEN RINGS, THUNDER GOD --LOOK AT ZOTARR!

SO, THE GIANT ALLY WAS A CONSTRUCT, FORGED IN GIERRODUR'S FURNACE-- AS HE ONCE FORGED MY MALLET, MJOLNIR.
'TIS A LESSON 'TWOULD BE WELL FOR US TO REMEMBER, ULIK--



NEXT ISSUE:

MORE ON ODIN'S ADVENTURES IN CALIFORNIA; MORE ON JANE FOSTER; AND THE RETURN OF A FORGOTTEN FOE. ALL YOURS IN:

ODINSONG!

THOR
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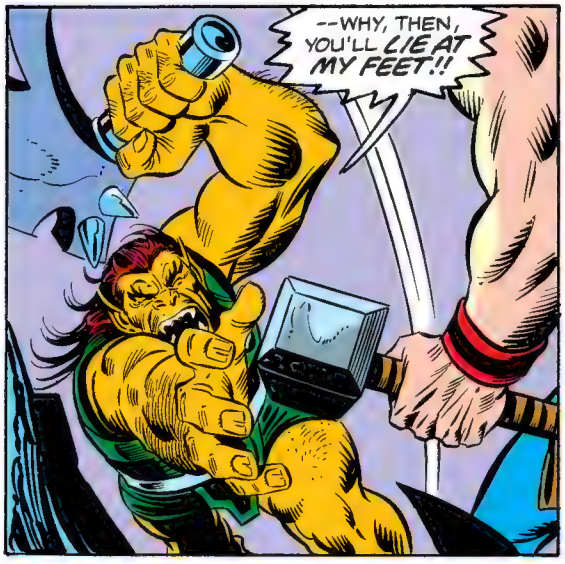
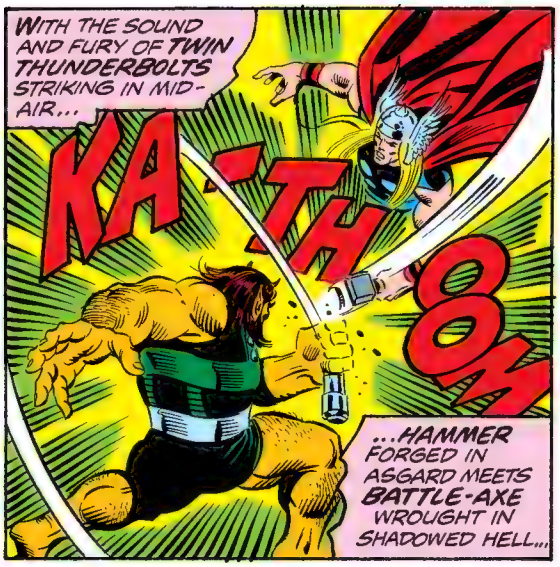
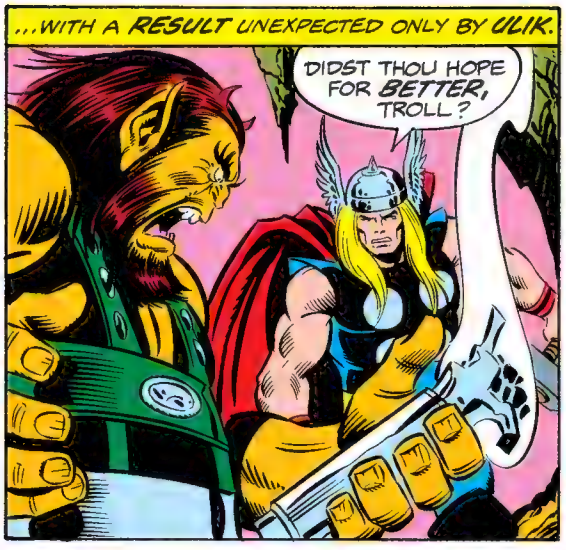
THE MIGHTY
THOR
ODIN IN EXILE!
ULIK AT BAY!
DON BLAKE AND JANE FOSTER --TOGETHER AGAIN!!
KANE ADKINS
AND NOW--
STAR-QUAKE!

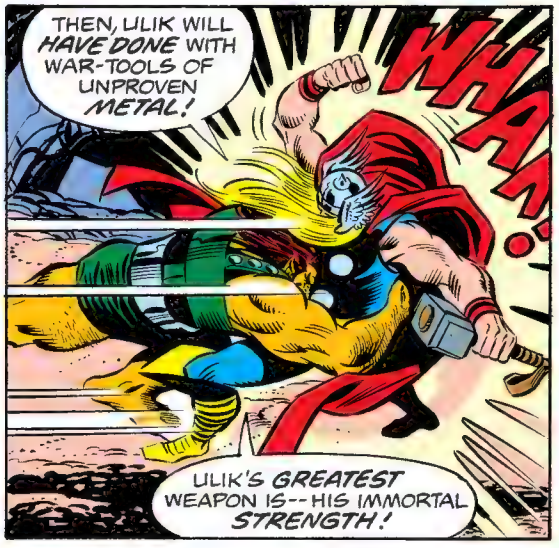
Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE MIGHTY THOR!™
TIME-QUAKE!
THE BATTLE BENEATH THE EARTH IS ENDED! AND, AIDED BY A MOST UNWILLING THUNDER GOD, THE MONSTROUS ULIK NOW STANDS SUPREME IN THE TROLL NETHERWORLD-- AT LEAST TO HEAR HIM TELL IT--!
THUS ENDS THE REIGN OF THE TROLL-KING GEIRRODUR! *
AND, ERE LONG, THE SURFACE WORLD AS WELL SHALL CRINGE BEFORE THE UNMATCHED MIGHT OF ULIK THE INVINCIBLE!
* AND, WITH THAT CORRECTED SPELLING OF THE TROLL-KING'S NAME, WE BEGIN A NEW ERA OF RAGNAROKIAN WONDERMENT WITH:
ROY THOMAS • SAL BUSCEMA • JOE SINNOTT
WRITER/EDITOR ARTIST EMBELLISHER
PHIL RACHE, colorist • JOHN COSTANZA, letterer
AS FOR THE PART THOR AND JANE FOSTER ARE DESTINED TO PLAY IN ALL THIS--WELL, READ ON, McGUFFEY--!

NOW, ASGARDIAN, LET US MAKE HASTE TO COMBINE THE TWO TROLL ARMIES, THAT THE WORLD OF MORTALS SHALL FALL TO US ALL THE SOONER!
WE'LL ATTACK BEFORE THIS DAY IS--
I SAY THEE NAY, ULIK!
WHAT? YOU DARE TO DEFY ME--?
THOU BASEST, MOST BRUTISH OF FOOLS!
FOR SO LONG AS YOUR TROLLS HELD MY BELOVED JANE A HOSTAGE--
DIDST THOU TRULY THINK THE SON OF ODIN COULD ALLY HIMSELF WITH THE LIKES OF THEE?
--FOR JUST SO LONG COULD OUR ILL-STARRED ALLIANCE ENDURE!
NOW, JANE IS FREE--AND OUR COMRADESHIP AT AN END!
OR DOST THOU FEAR TO FACE ME, LACKING AN ARMY AT THY BACK?
STEP FORWARD, DOLT, AND YOU SHALL SEE!
JANE--THE TROLL IS A FOE MOST FORMIDABLE. FLEE THOU TO THE OUTER CAVERNS, WHILST I--
I SNATCHED GEIRRODUR'S OWN SPEAR AWAY AND HELD IT TO HIS THROAT, DARLING.
DO YOU THINK I'LL LEAVE YOU NOW?
THOU SPEAKEST A'RIGHT. 'TWAS A REQUEST UNWORTHY.
NOW, HAVE AT THEE, DEVIL--
THE GOD OF THUNDER STANDS READY!
IN YOUR OWN OFT-USED WORDS--SO BE IT!
BY THE SEVEN RINGS, IF YOU'LL NOT MARCH AT MY SIDE--

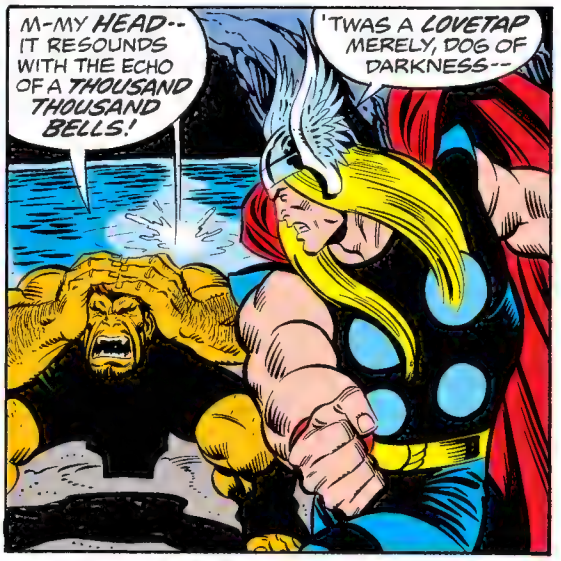

--WHY, THEN, YOU'LL LIE AT MY FEET!!

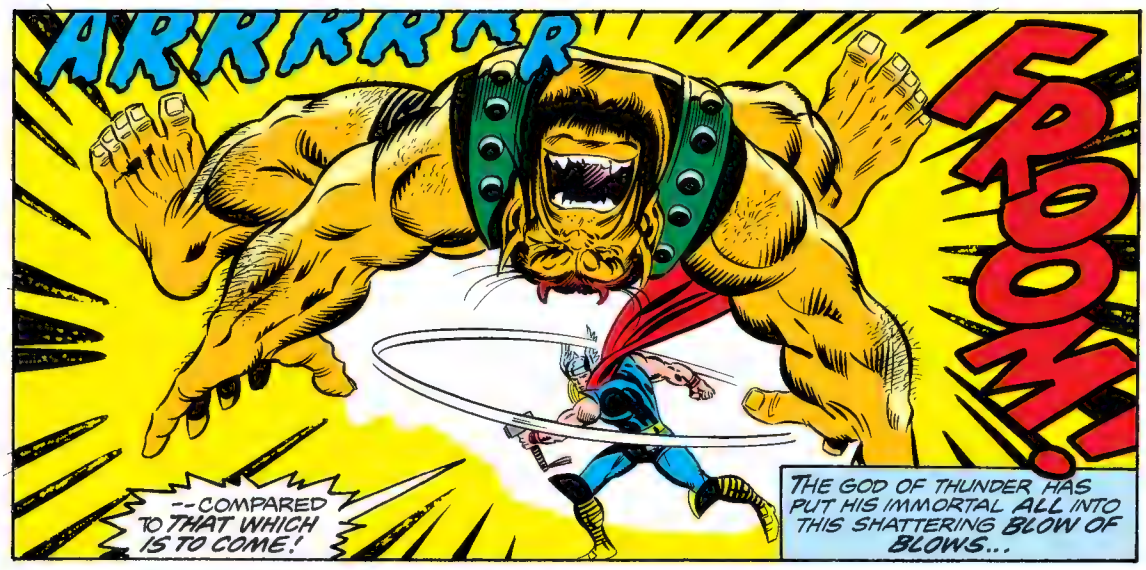

WITH THE SOUND AND FURY OF TWIN THUNDERBOLTS STRIKING IN MID-AIR...
KA-THOOM
...HAMMER FORGED IN ASGARD MEETS BATTLE-AXE WROUGHT IN SHADOWED HELL...


...WITH A RESULT UNEXPECTED ONLY BY ULIK.
DIDST THOU HOPE FOR BETTER, TROLL?

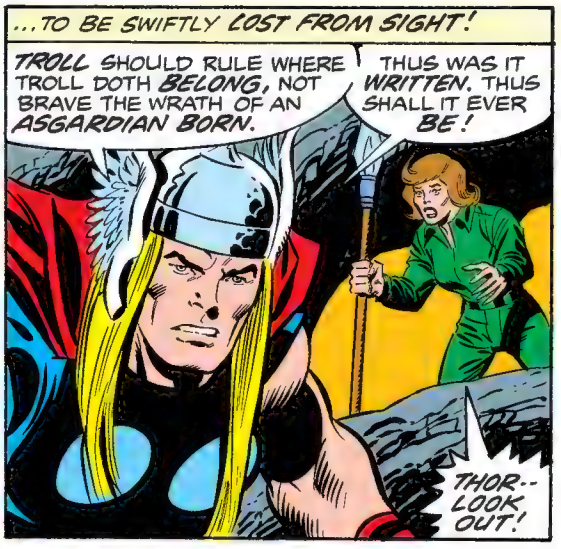

THEN, ULIK WILL HAVE DONE WITH WAR-TOOLS OF UNPROVEN METAL!
WHAM!
ULIK'S GREATEST WEAPON IS--HIS IMMORTAL STRENGTH!

THOR, TOO, IS NOT WITHOUT STRENGTH, ULIK.
THOMP!

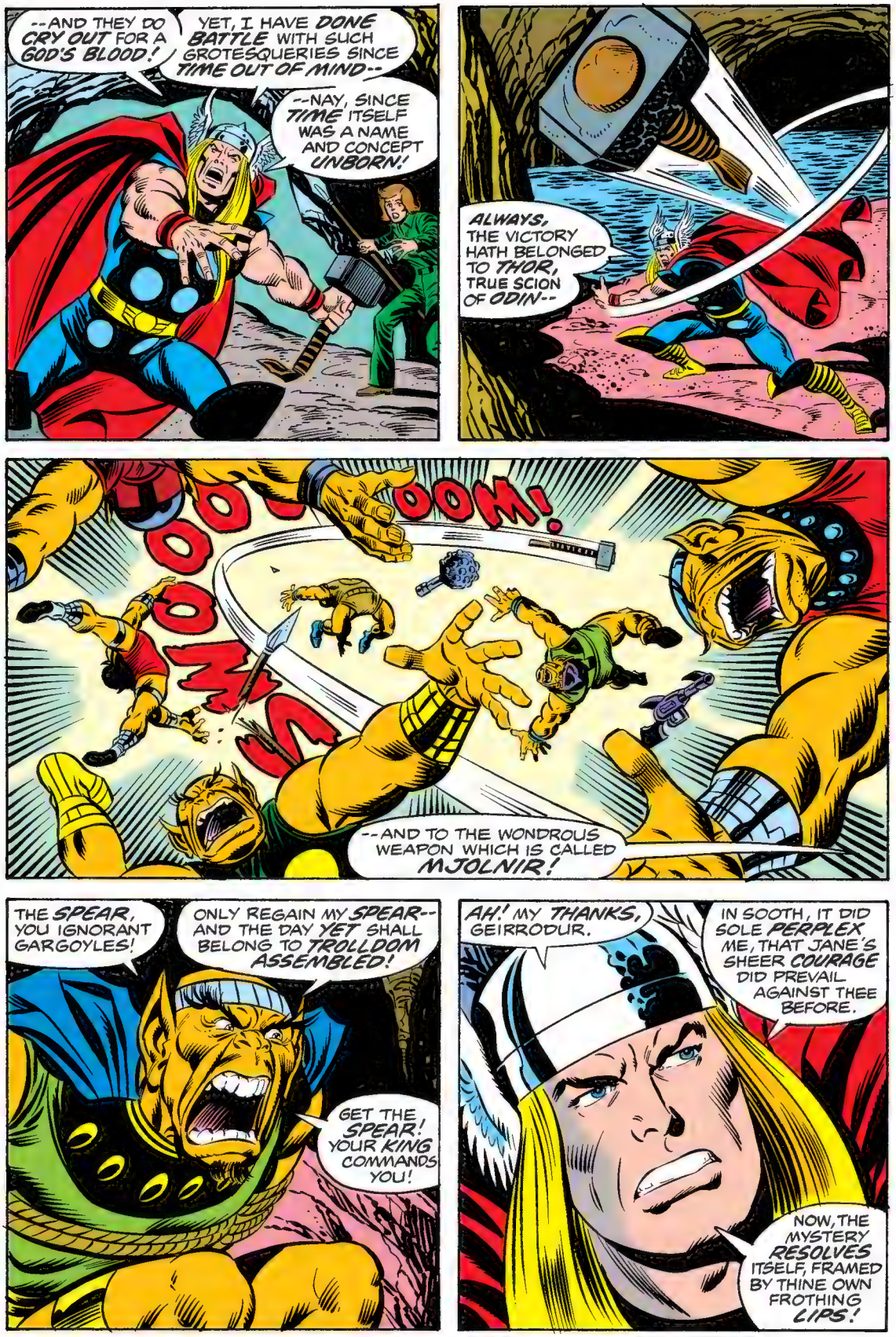

M-MY HEAD--IT RESOUNDS WITH THE ECHO OF A THOUSAND THOUSAND BELLS!
'TWAS A LOVETAP MERELY, DOG OF DARKNESS--


ARRRRRR
FROOM!
--COMPARED TO THAT WHICH IS TO COME!
THE GOD OF THUNDER HAS PUT HIS IMMORTAL ALL INTO THIS SHATTERING BLOW OF BLOWS...

...WITH THE RESULT THAT EVEN ULIK'S MASSIVE BULK IS HURLED, LIKE A LEAF BEFORE A STORM, INTO THE WINDING UNDER-GROUND RIVER...
KUH-SPLUSH!


...TO BE SWIFTLY LOST FROM SIGHT!
TROLL SHOULD RULE WHERE TROLL DOTH BELONG, NOT BRAVE THE WRATH OF AN ASGARDIAN BORN.
THUS WAS IT WRITTEN. THUS SHALL IT EVER BE!
THOR--LOOK OUT!

BY THE GIRTH OF VOLSTAGG!
ULIK'S HORDES RETURN--


--AND THEY DO CRY OUT FOR A GOD'S BLOOD!
YET, I HAVE DONE BATTLE WITH SUCH GROTESQUERIES SINCE TIME OUT OF MIND--
--NAY, SINCE TIME ITSELF WAS A NAME AND CONCEPT UNBORN!
ALWAYS, THE VICTORY HATH BELONGED TO THOR, TRUE SCION OF ODIN--
BOOM!
BOOM!
--AND TO THE WONDROUS WEAPON WHICH IS CALLED MJOLNIR!
THE SPEAR, YOU IGNORANT GARGOYLES!
ONLY REGAIN MY SPEAR-- AND THE DAY YET SHALL BELONG TO TROLLDOM ASSEMBLED!
GET THE SPEAR! YOUR KING COMMANDS YOU!
AH! MY THANKS, GEIRRODUR.
IN SOOTH, IT DID SOLE PERPLEX ME, THAT JANE'S SHEER COURAGE DID PREVAIL AGAINST THEE BEFORE.
NOW, THE MYSTERY RESOLVES ITSELF, FRAMED BY THINE OWN FROTHING LIPS!

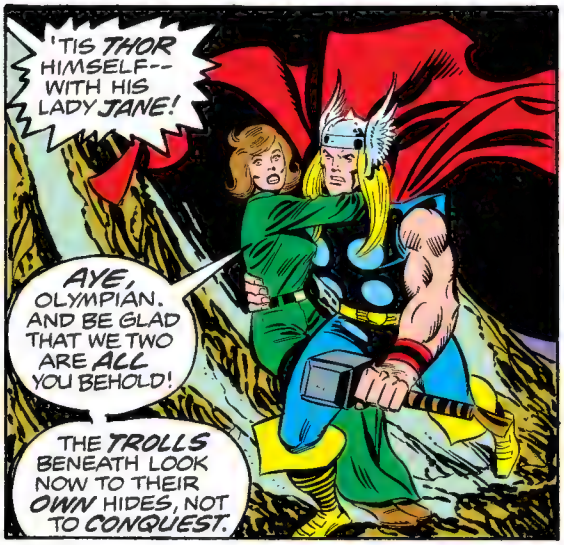
JANE! THE SPEAR-- QUICKLY!
HERE! BUT, I STILL DON'T SEE WHAT--
THAT, BELOVED, IS BECAUSE THOU DOST LOOK WITH MORTAL EYES UPON THAT WHICH IS OLDER THAN THE WORLD.
JUST AS MINE OWN URU HAMMER DOTH YIELD UP POWER BEYOND RECKONING--
--SO THE SHAFT OF EVEN A TROLL-KING MAY BE POSSESSED OF CERTAIN MAGICAL PROPERTIES--
--WHICH, MINGLING MADLY WITH THE MURK-FILLED WATERS OF A SORCEROUS STREAM--
THOOM!!
--MAY CAUSE UPHEAVALS AS GARGANTUAN IN SCOPE--
--AS THEY BE UNPREDICTABLE IN NATURE!

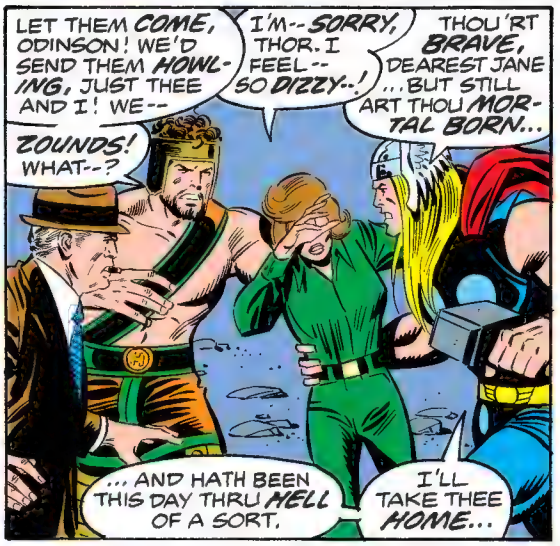
AND, UNPREDICTABLE THEY MOST ASSURedly ARE!
FOR, EVEN AS THE EARTH-SHAKING ROAR RESOUNDS THRU THE DEPTHS, THE SUBTERRANEAN RIVER ITSELF SEEMS TO CATCH FIRE--
--TILL THE CAVERN WALLS THEMSELVES BEGIN TO MELT AND FLOW!
STAND THEE BACK, MY BELOVED--AND AVERT THINE EYES!
BRAVE THOU TRULY ART--YET, I'D NOT HAVE ANY MORTAL BEAR WITNESS TO WHAT MUST FOLLOW!
JANE FOSTER STARES ON, HOWEVER, IN TRANSFIXED HORROR-- AS THE WHOLE OF THE VAST NATURAL LABYRINTH BECOMES A BLAZING INFERNO BEFORE WHICH THE TERRIFIED TROLLS FLEE PELL-MELL...
BUT, WHITHER THEY FLEE, AND IF THEY SHALL SURVIVE, EVEN A GOD KNOWS NOT.
AND ONE THEY LEAVE BEHIND, FORGOTTEN...
COME BACK, YOU FILTHY--
COME BACK!
PLEASE--!
BUT, THUNDER GOD AND HIS LADY FAIR HEAR NOT, AS A HARD-HURLED MALLET PROPELS THEM INSTANTLY UPWARD--
--OUT OF THE RAGING, ALL-ENGULFING NIGHTMARE BELOW--

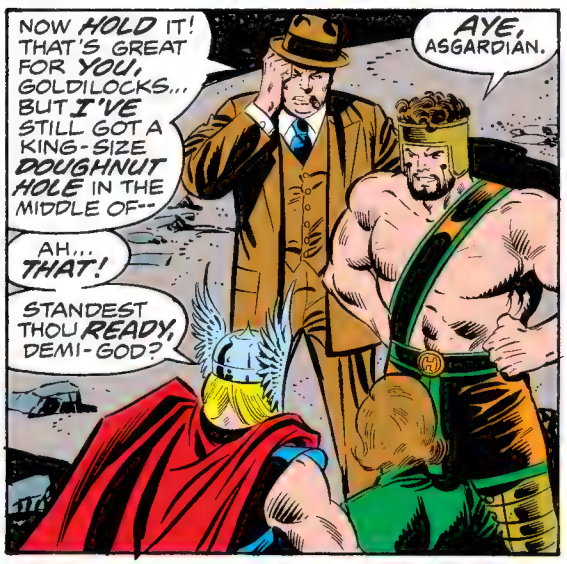
--AND TOWARD A DIFFERENT BRAND OF MADNESS, FAR ABOVE--!
AWRIGHT, EVERYBODY-- STAND BACK, I SAID!
NOBODY GETS NEAR THAT HOLE IN THE STREET, NOT EVEN IF HE'S GOT A PRESS PASS.
IN FACT, ESPECIALLY IF HE'S GOT A PRESS PASS!
POLICE LINE
THAT INCLUDES YOU, TOO, WHISKERS, SO--
I'VE BEEN CALLED BY MANY NAMES, HERAKLES AMONG THEM...
...AND HERCULES, PRINCE OF POWER, BY MOST.
BUT, BY ALL THE GODS OF MINE OWN OLYMPUS--
--"WHISKERS" IS NOT A NAME TO MY LIKING!
UH OH!
FTAK!
S-SO YOU'RE THOR'S GREEK BUDDY, HUH? WELL, WHY DIDN'T YOU SAY SO?
THEY DON'T TELL US ROOKIES NUTHIN'!
THOU DOST THE TASK THAT HATH BEEN APPOINTED THEE.
METHINKS I SHOULD EXPECT NO MORE.
STAND ASIDE, THEN, AND LET ME PASS.
ANY SIGN OF LIFE DOWN THERE YET, RILEY?
NONE. WE TRIED LOWERING AN ELECTRIC LANTERN DOWN THERE--
AND WE RAN OUT OF CABLE, BUT NOT OUT OF HOLE.
I SUSPECT, MORTAL, THAT THIS BE ONE TUNNEL AT THE END OF WHICH THOU SHALT NE'ER SEE LIGHT.

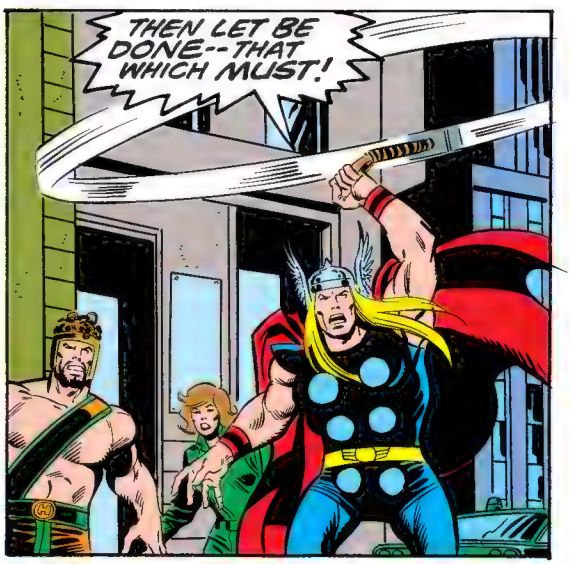
YOU AGAIN, HERCULES? CRIPES, AND HERE I DON'T EVEN KNOW YET IF I BELIEVE IN YOU GOD-GUYS OR NOT!
THOU WOULDST DO WELL TO BELIEVE, SERGEANT BLUMMKIN.
IT'S LIEU-TENANT. I GOT A PROMOTION THE OTHER DAY. FORGOT TO TELL YOU. *
MY BEST WISHES TO THEE.
* OR US, FOR THAT MATTER. --RASCALLY.
THANKS...

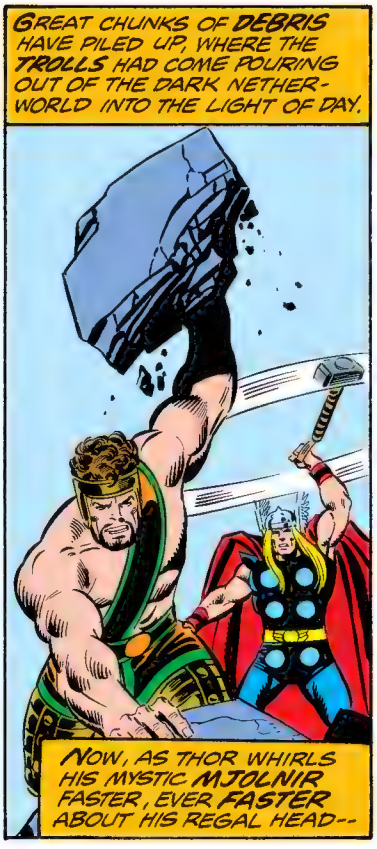
BUT, I'LL BE BACK POUNDIN' A BEAT IF I DON'T EITHER CLOSE THIS CRATER, OR GET TO THE BOTTOM OF--
HEY! WHAT'RE YOU LOOK-IN' AT?
SOMETHING STIRS BELOW-- RISES TOWARD US, AS IF--
CENTAURS AND SATYRS!


'TIS THOR HIMSELF-- WITH HIS LADY JANE!
AYE, OLYMPIAN. AND BE GLAD THAT WE TWO ARE ALL YOU BEHOLD!
THE TROLLS BENEATH LOOK NOW TO THEIR OWN HIDES, NOT TO CONQUEST.


LET THEM COME, ODINSON! WE'D SEND THEM HOWL-ING, JUST THEE AND I! WE--
I'M--SORRY, THOR. I FEEL-- SO DIZZY--!
THOU'RT BRAVE, DEAREST JANE ...BUT STILL ART THOU MOR-TAL BORN...
ZOUNDS! WHAT--?
... AND HATH BEEN THIS DAY THRU HELL OF A SORT.
I'LL TAKE THEE HOME...

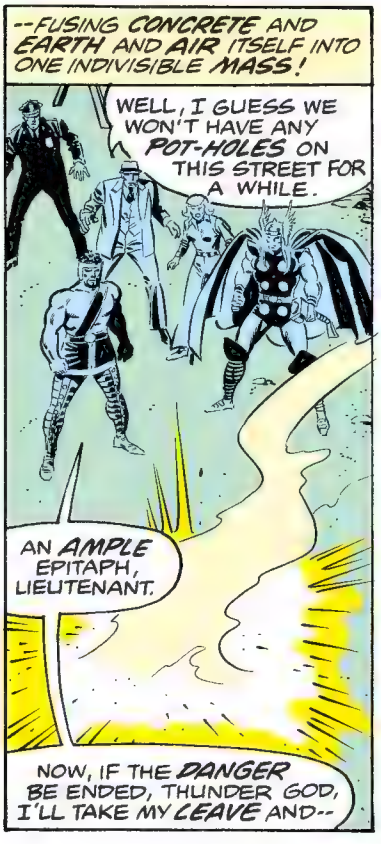

NOW HOLD IT! THAT'S GREAT FOR YOU, GOLDILOCKS... BUT I'VE STILL GOT A KING-SIZE DOUGHNUT HOLE IN THE MIDDLE OF--
AYE, ASGARDIAN.
AH... THAT!
STANDEST THOU READY, DEMI-GOD?


THEN LET BE DONE--THAT WHICH MUST!


GREAT CHUNKS OF DEBRIS HAVE PILED UP, WHERE THE TROLLS HAD COME POURING OUT OF THE DARK NETHER-WORLD INTO THE LIGHT OF DAY.
NOW, AS THOR WHIRLS HIS MYSTIC MJOLNIR FASTER, EVER FASTER ABOUT HIS REGAL HEAD--

--THE MIGHTIEST OF GRECO-ROMAN MAN-GODS SENDS FRAGMENT AFTER JAGGED FRAGMENT BACK INTO THE ENFOLDING BLACKNESS BELOW--

--EVEN AS HAMMER-SUMMONED LIGHTNING-BOLT STRIKES FROM A SKY WHICH WAS CLOUDLESS, MERE MOMENTS AGONE--
KE-RAAAK-K!


--FUSING CONCRETE AND EARTH AND AIR ITSELF INTO ONE INDIVISIBLE MASS!
WELL, I GUESS WE WON'T HAVE ANY POT-HOLES ON THIS STREET FOR A WHILE.
AN AMPLE EPITAPH, LIEUTENANT.
NOW, IF THE DANGER BE ENDED, THUNDER GOD, I'LL TAKE MY LEAVE AND--

NO-- WAIT, UH, HERCULES! DON'T LEAVE! I'VE COME SO FAR-- TO SPEAK WITH YOU--!
THEN CATCH THY BREATH, WHOE'ER THOU BE--
--AND SPEAK!
AYE! HERCULES IS TURNED TO HEAR.

I--I REPRESENT THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA AT LOS ANGELES-- U.C.L.A.--AND I'VE BEEN AUTHORIZED TO INVITE YOU TO LECTURE AT OUR COLLEGE OF ANCIENT STUDIES--
--ON THE TRUTH BEHIND THE OLD GREEK MYTHS!
IN SOOTH, 'TWOULD BE AN HONOR, MORTAL...

BUT, WHY DOST THOU NOT ASK THE INCOMPARABLE THOR TO SPEAK, AS WELL?
WELL, UH--TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH, ER--FROM WHAT LITTLE WE CAN GATHER, THE ASGARDIAN PANTHEON ISN'T EXACTLY ACCORDING TO HOYLE.
WHAT I MEAN IS--NOBODY IN MY DEPARTMENT EVER EVEN HEARD OF VOLSTAGG--OR HOGUN THE GRIM, OR--
THY POINT BE WELL MADE, MY FRIEND.
HANG ON MIGHTILY TO THINE ILLUSIONS.
COME, MILADY...
BUT DOES THAT MEAN--YOU'LL COME, HERCULES?
AYE, MORTAL. FOR, 'TIS FABLED THAT CALIFORNIA BE AS FAIR AND GOLDEN AS FAR-OFF OLYMPUS ITSELF.
LIKE ALL FABLES, 'TIS MOST LIKELY OVER-EMBROIDERED.
BUT, WE'LL SEE...!
I PRAY THEE, KEEP WATCH FOR A MOMENT, JANE.
'TWILL BE SIMPLER FOR THOR...
...TO WALK AMONG MEN...
FTOOM!
...AS A MAN!
MEANWHILE, IN A RUNDOWN NEIGHBORHOOD ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA...
...AND I REPEAT, AMIGOS--MY FELLOW WORKERS--THAT WE MUST EXERCISE OUR GOD-GIVEN RIGHT TO STRIKE... TO PICKET... UNTIL THE VICTORY IS OURS!
NO, WE HAVEN'T RESURRECTED SAMUEL GOMPERS, FRANTIC ONE. THE SPEAKER IS YOUNG TOMAS CHAMARO, LEADER OF AN UNRECOGNIZED GRAPE-PICKERS' UNION...
...AND HE'S ANGRY!
TELL ME--ARE WE GOING TO LET ANTHONY COMBACH AND HIS LACKEY CONNERS FRIGHTEN US AWAY?
ARE WE GOING TO CONTINUE TO PICKET HIS VINE-YARDS?!?
NO!
YES!

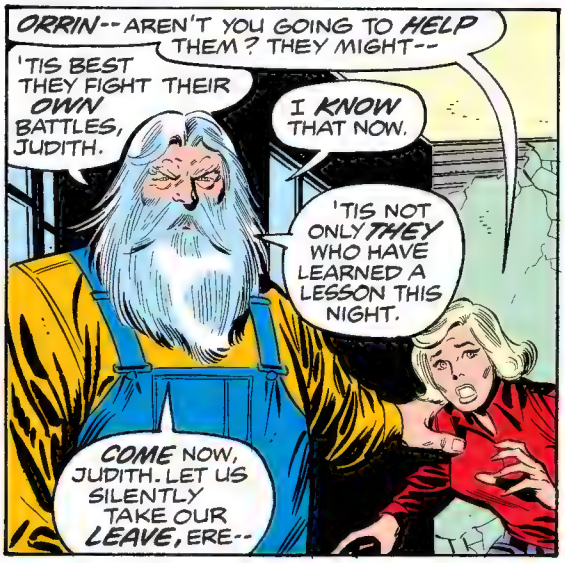
VERILY, JUDITH--LITTLE THOUGH I COMPREHEND OF WHAT THIS MAN CHAMARO DOTH SAY, STILL DO I SENSE HIS GOOD WILL.
CANNOT THE MAN COMBACH DO LIKEWISE, AND PAY THESE MEN THEIR WORTH, IN COIN OF THE REALM?
IT--DOESN'T ALWAYS WORK THAT WAY, ORRIN.* BUT--SHHH--!
*"ORRIN," OF COURSE, IS IN REALITY ODIN, LORD OF ASGARD--BUT VERILY, ALL MEMORY BE FLED FROM HIM. --ROY.
ALL RIGHT, AMIGOS. NOW IT'S TIME FOR YOUR QUESTIONS.
ARE THERE ANY--?
NONE, CHAMARO!
WHO--?
MATTER 'A FACT, I THINK YOU HAD A WHOLE BUNCH 'A MUTES LISTENIN' TO YER PURTY LITTLE SPEECH!
AN' IF ANYBODY SAYS DIFFERENT, HE CAN TAKE IT UP WITH MY BOYS HERE!
CONNERS!
THAT'S MY NAME, "AMIGO," DON'T WEAR IT OUT!
THIS MEETIN' IS ADJOURNED, AS OF NOW!
EVERYBODY MOVE IT--AN' I MEAN PRONTO!
NO! THIS IS STILL A FREE COUNTRY, CONNERS--EVEN IF YOUR KIND EXIST IN IT--YOU AND YOUR BOSS, COMBACH!
THESE MEN HAVE EVERY RIGHT TO--
YOU AIN'T GOT NO RIGHTS, WET-BACK, 'LESSEN I SAY SO--
--IZZAT CLEAR???
BOK!

I'M NO WETBACK! I WAS BORN HERE! YOU CAN'T--
STILL FEELIN' FEISTY, HUH, GREASEBALL?
WELL, THIS PIPE OUGHTTA--
I BID THEE-- HALT!

"I BID THEE HALT"? WHAT KINDA TALK IS THAT? I
FAP!

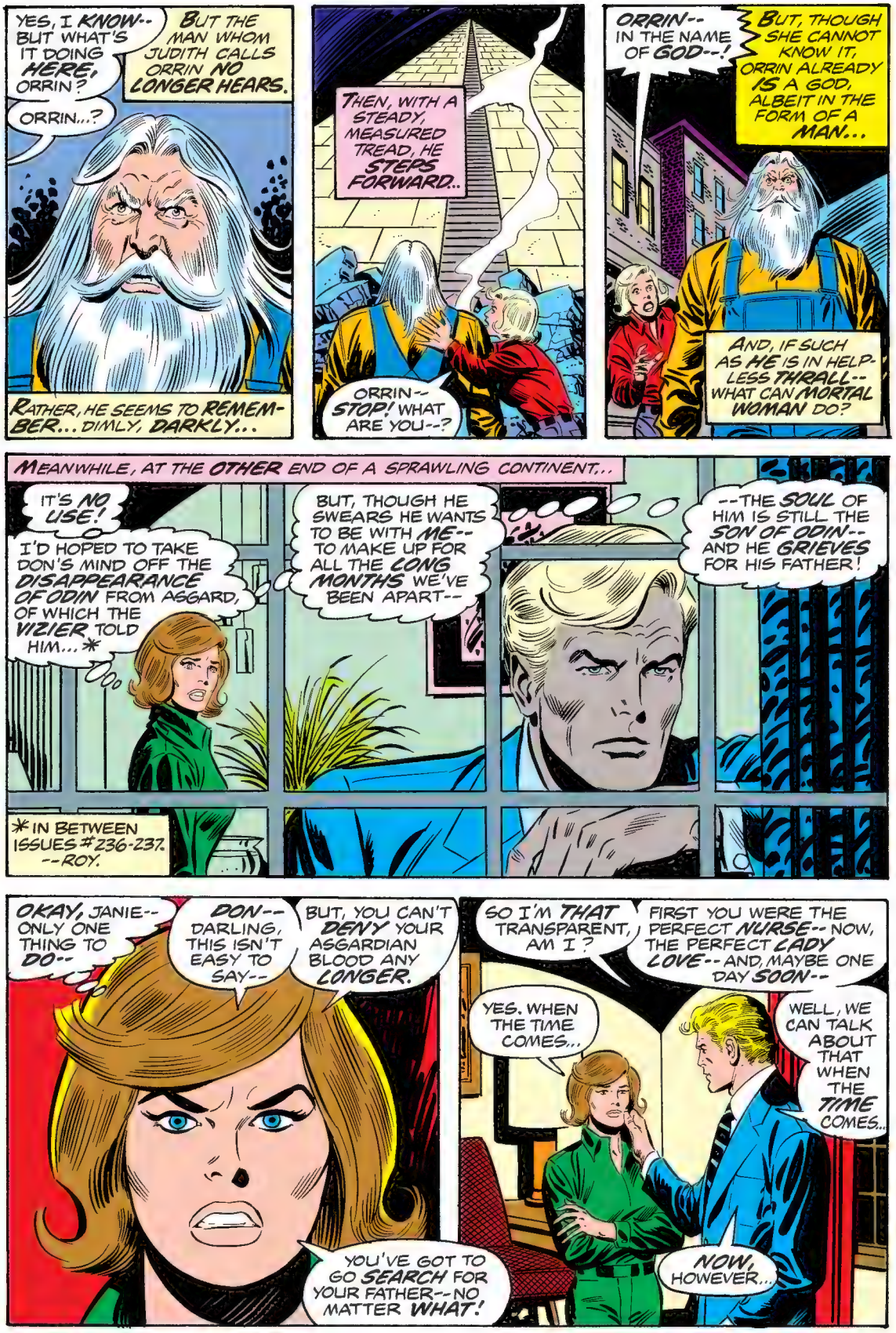
I HAVE TRIED TO STAND ASIDE FROM THE WAY OF VIOLENCE.
YET, IN TRUTH, THERE BE THOSE WHO KNOW NO OTHER PATH, AND SO--
YOU HEAR THAT, AMIGOS?

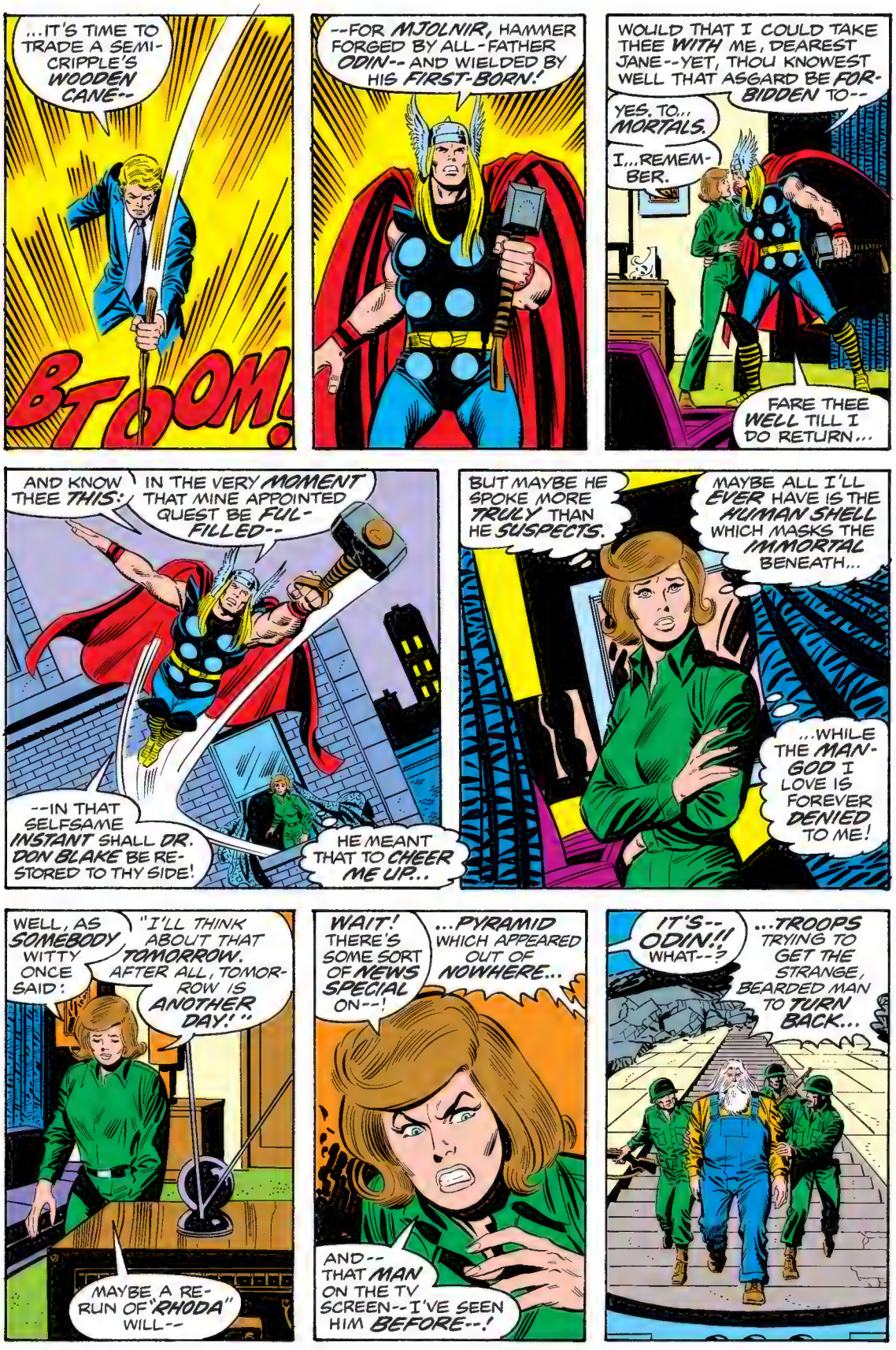
THIS MAN MAY SPEAK STRANGELY-- BUT HE'S SHOWN US WE MUST STAND UP FOR OUR RIGHTS!
NOW, LET US SHOW HIM JUST WHAT WE'VE LEARNED!
WE'RE WITH YOU, TOMAS!

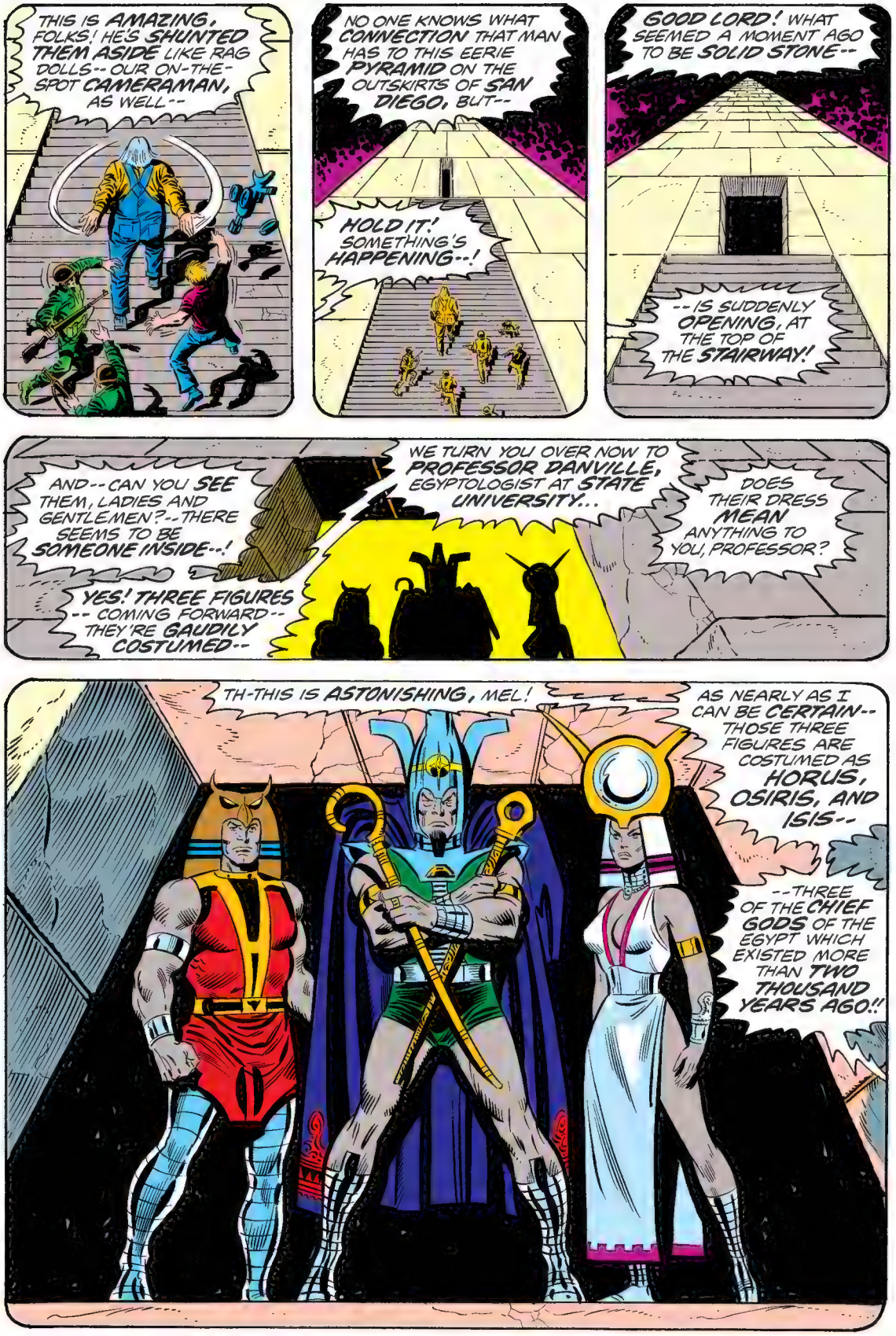

ORRIN-- AREN'T YOU GOING TO HELP THEM? THEY MIGHT--
'TIS BEST THEY FIGHT THEIR OWN BATTLES, JUDITH.
I KNOW THAT NOW.
'TIS NOT ONLY THEY WHO HAVE LEARNED A LESSON THIS NIGHT.
COME NOW, JUDITH. LET US SILENTLY TAKE OUR LEAVE, ERE--

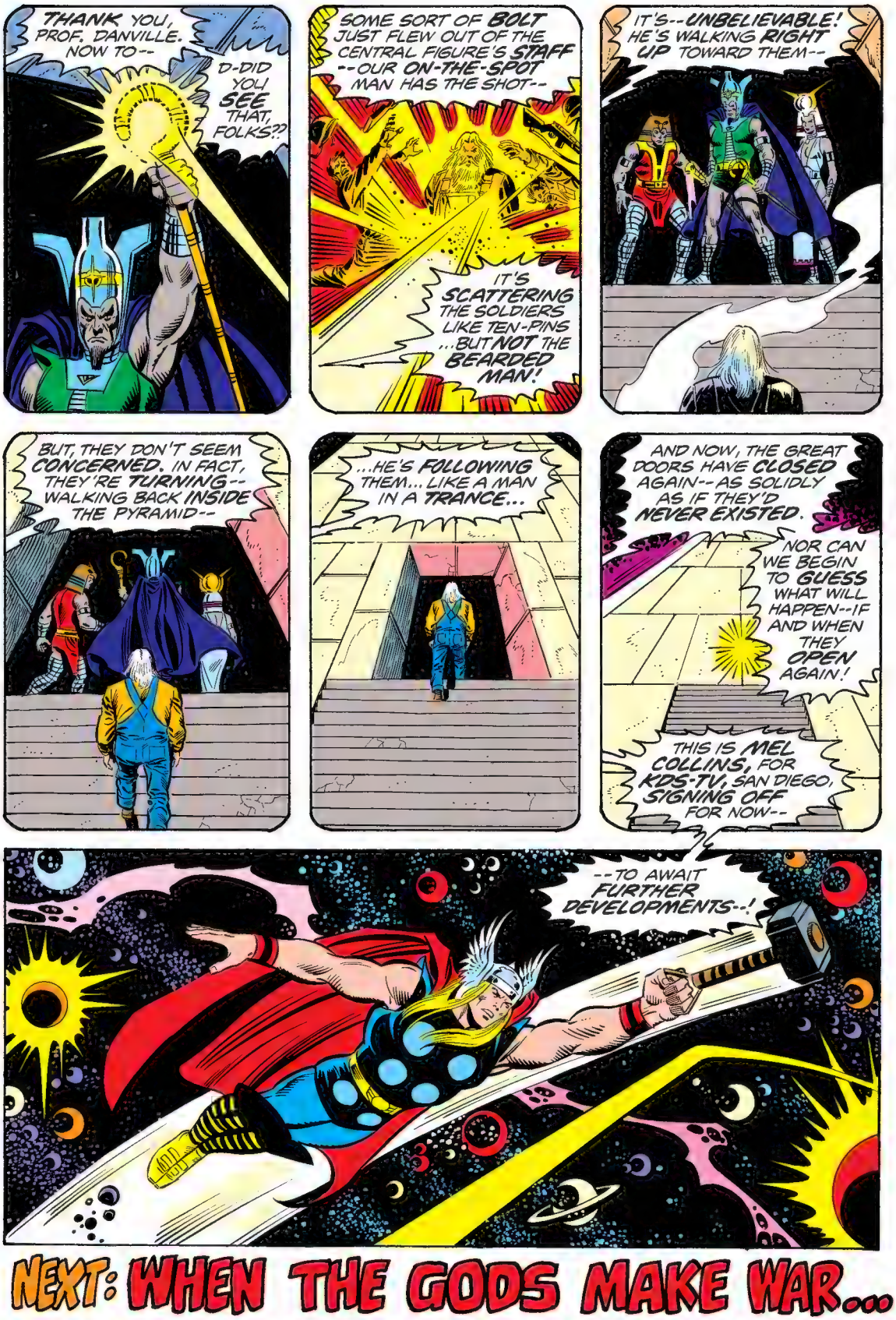
WHAT MADNESS IS THIS??
THE FLOOR DOTH SHAKE-- THE VERY CEILING COLLAPSE--!
RUMMMBLL
HOLY SMOKE!

NOTHING SHALL HARM A FRIEND OF ORRIN!
KAK!
TH-THANKS!
NOW, LET'S GET OUT OF HERE, AND SEE IF THEY'RE RE-MAKING "EARTHQUAKE" ALREADY, AND WE JUST BECAME VICTIMS OF SENSURROUND--
--OR IF THIS WAS THE REAL THING, AND--
ASSUREDLY, THOU DOST KNOW THE FORM, JUDITH.
GOOD LORD! WHAT'S THAT??
'TIS ONLY THE SANITY OF IT THAT DOTH ELUDE THEE!
SKRUTTCH!
VERILY, 'TIS A GIGANTIC PYRAMID-- ARISING FROM OUT THE VERY EARTH ITSELF!


YES, I KNOW-- BUT WHAT'S IT DOING HERE, ORRIN?
ORRIN...?
BUT THE MAN WHOM JUDITH CALLS ORRIN NO LONGER HEARS.
RATHER, HE SEEMS TO REMEMBER... DIMLY, DARKLY...
THEN, WITH A STEADY, MEASURED TREAD, HE STEPS FORWARD..
ORRIN-- STOP! WHAT ARE YOU--?
ORRIN-- IN THE NAME OF GOD--!
BUT, THOUGH SHE CANNOT KNOW IT, ORRIN ALREADY IS A GOD, ALBEIT IN THE FORM OF A MAN...
AND, IF SUCH AS HE IS IN HELPLESS THRALL-- WHAT CAN MORTAL WOMAN DO?
MEANWHILE, AT THE OTHER END OF A SPRAWLING CONTINENT..
IT'S NO USE!
I'D HOPED TO TAKE DON'S MIND OFF THE DISAPPEARANCE OF ODIN FROM ASGARD, OF WHICH THE VIZIER TOLD HIM... *
BUT, THOUGH HE SWEARS HE WANTS TO BE WITH ME-- TO MAKE UP FOR ALL THE LONG MONTHS WE'VE BEEN APART--
--THE SOUL OF HIM IS STILL THE SON OF ODIN-- AND HE GRIEVES FOR HIS FATHER!
* IN BETWEEN ISSUES #236-237. --ROY.
OKAY, JANIE-- ONLY ONE THING TO DO--
DON-- DARLING, THIS ISN'T EASY TO SAY--
BUT, YOU CAN'T DENY YOUR ASGARDIAN BLOOD ANY LONGER.
YOU'VE GOT TO GO SEARCH FOR YOUR FATHER--NO MATTER WHAT!
SO I'M THAT TRANSPARENT, AM I?
FIRST YOU WERE THE PERFECT NURSE-- NOW, THE PERFECT LADY LOVE-- AND, MAYBE ONE DAY SOON--
YES. WHEN THE TIME COMES...
WELL, WE CAN TALK ABOUT THAT WHEN THE TIME COMES...
NOW, HOWEVER...


...IT'S TIME TO TRADE A SEMI-CRIPPLE'S WOODEN CANE--
BTOOM!
--FOR MJOLNIR, HAMMER FORGED BY ALL-FATHER ODIN-- AND WIELDED BY HIS FIRST-BORN!
WOULD THAT I COULD TAKE THEE WITH ME, DEAREST JANE--YET, THOU KNOWEST WELL THAT ASGARD BE FORBIDDEN TO--
YES. TO... MORTALS.
I...REMEMBER.
FARE THEE WELL TILL I DO RETURN...
AND KNOW THEE THIS:
IN THE VERY MOMENT THAT MINE APPOINTED QUEST BE FULFILLED--
--IN THAT SELFSAME INSTANT SHALL DR. DON BLAKE BE RESTORED TO THY SIDE!
HE MEANT THAT TO CHEER ME UP...
BUT MAYBE HE SPOKE MORE TRULY THAN HE SUSPECTS.
MAYBE ALL I'LL EVER HAVE IS THE HUMAN SHELL WHICH MASKS THE IMMORTAL BENEATH...
...WHILE THE MAN-GOD I LOVE IS FOREVER DENIED TO ME!
WELL, AS SOMEBODY WITTY ONCE SAID:
"I'LL THINK ABOUT THAT TOMORROW. AFTER ALL, TOMORROW IS ANOTHER DAY!"
MAYBE A RE-RUN OF "RHODA" WILL--
WAIT! THERE'S SOME SORT OF NEWS SPECIAL ON--!
...PYRAMID WHICH APPEARED OUT OF NOWHERE...
AND--THAT MAN ON THE TV SCREEN--I'VE SEEN HIM BEFORE--!
IT'S--ODIN!! WHAT--?
...TROOPS TRYING TO GET THE STRANGE, BEARDED MAN TO TURN BACK...


THIS IS AMAZING, FOLKS! HE'S SHUNTED THEM ASIDE LIKE RAG DOLLS -- OUR ON-THE-SPOT CAMERAMAN, AS WELL --
NO ONE KNOWS WHAT CONNECTION THAT MAN HAS TO THIS EERIE PYRAMID ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF SAN DIEGO, BUT --
HOLD IT! SOMETHING'S HAPPENING --!
GOOD LORD! WHAT SEEMED A MOMENT AGO TO BE SOLID STONE --
-- IS SUDDENLY OPENING, AT THE TOP OF THE STAIRWAY!
AND -- CAN YOU SEE THEM, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN? -- THERE SEEMS TO BE SOMEONE INSIDE --!
YES! THREE FIGURES -- COMING FORWARD -- THEY'RE GAUDILY COSTUMED --
WE TURN YOU OVER NOW TO PROFESSOR DANVILLE, EGYPTOLOGIST AT STATE UNIVERSITY...
DOES THEIR DRESS MEAN ANYTHING TO YOU, PROFESSOR?
TH-THIS IS ASTONISHING, MEL!
AS NEARLY AS I CAN BE CERTAIN -- THOSE THREE FIGURES ARE COSTUMED AS HORUS, OSIRIS, AND ISIS --
-- THREE OF THE CHIEF GODS OF THE EGYPT WHICH EXISTED MORE THAN TWO THOUSAND YEARS AGO!!


THANK YOU, PROF. DANVILLE. NOW TO--
D-DID YOU SEE THAT, FOLKS??
SOME SORT OF BOLT JUST FLEW OUT OF THE CENTRAL FIGURE'S STAFF --OUR ON-THE-SPOT MAN HAS THE SHOT--
IT'S SCATTERING THE SOLDIERS LIKE TEN-PINS ...BUT NOT THE BEARDED MAN!
IT'S--UNBELIEVABLE! HE'S WALKING RIGHT UP TOWARD THEM--
BUT, THEY DON'T SEEM CONCERNED. IN FACT, THEY'RE TURNING-- WALKING BACK INSIDE THE PYRAMID--
...HE'S FOLLOWING THEM... LIKE A MAN IN A TRANCE...
AND NOW, THE GREAT DOORS HAVE CLOSED AGAIN--AS SOLIDLY AS IF THEY'D NEVER EXISTED.
NOR CAN WE BEGIN TO GUESS WHAT WILL HAPPEN--IF AND WHEN THEY OPEN AGAIN!
THIS IS MEL COLLINS, FOR KDS-TV, SAN DIEGO, SIGNING OFF FOR NOW--
--TO AWAIT FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS--!
NEXT: WHEN THE GODS MAKE WAR...

THOR
MARVEL COMICS GROUP™
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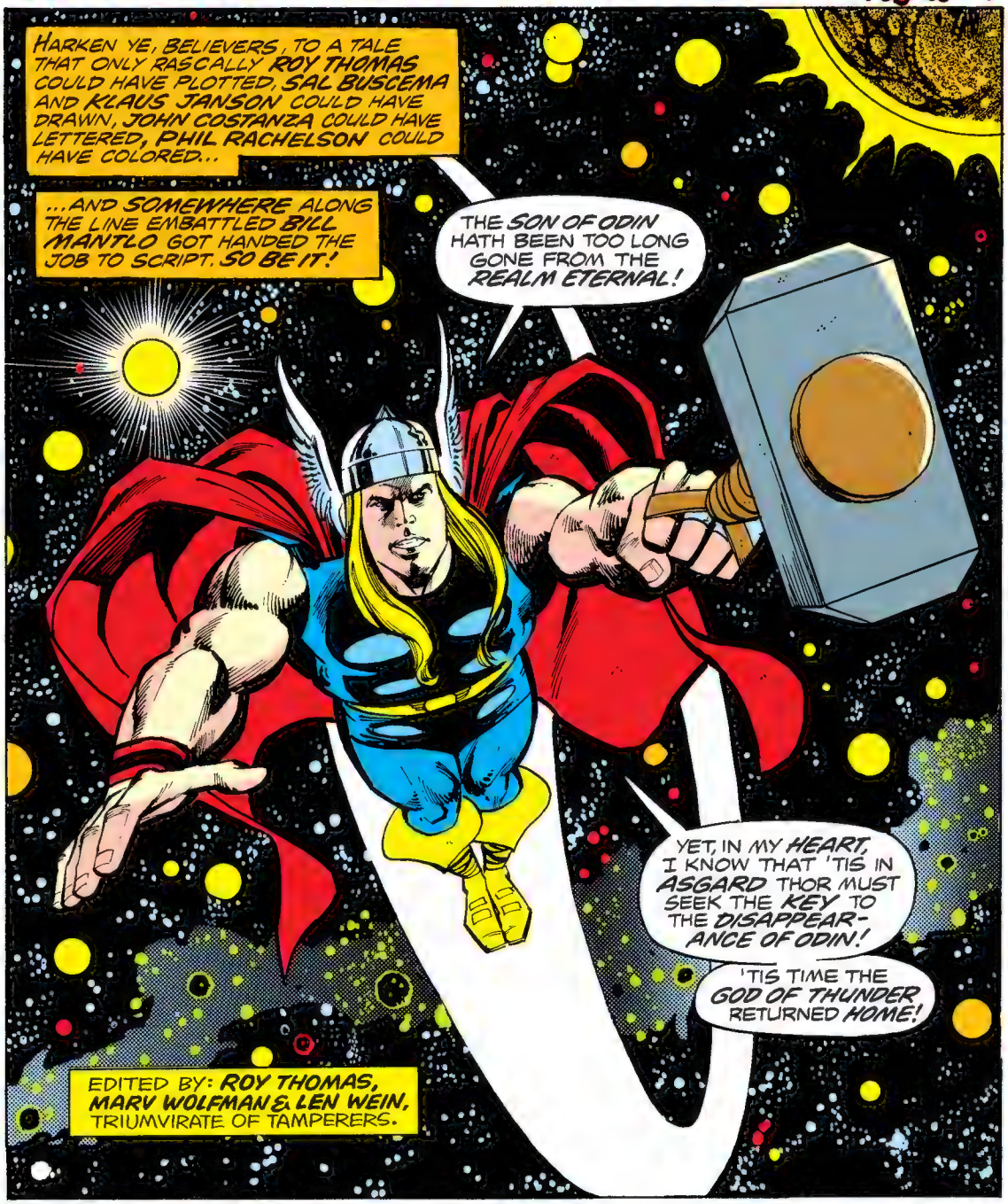
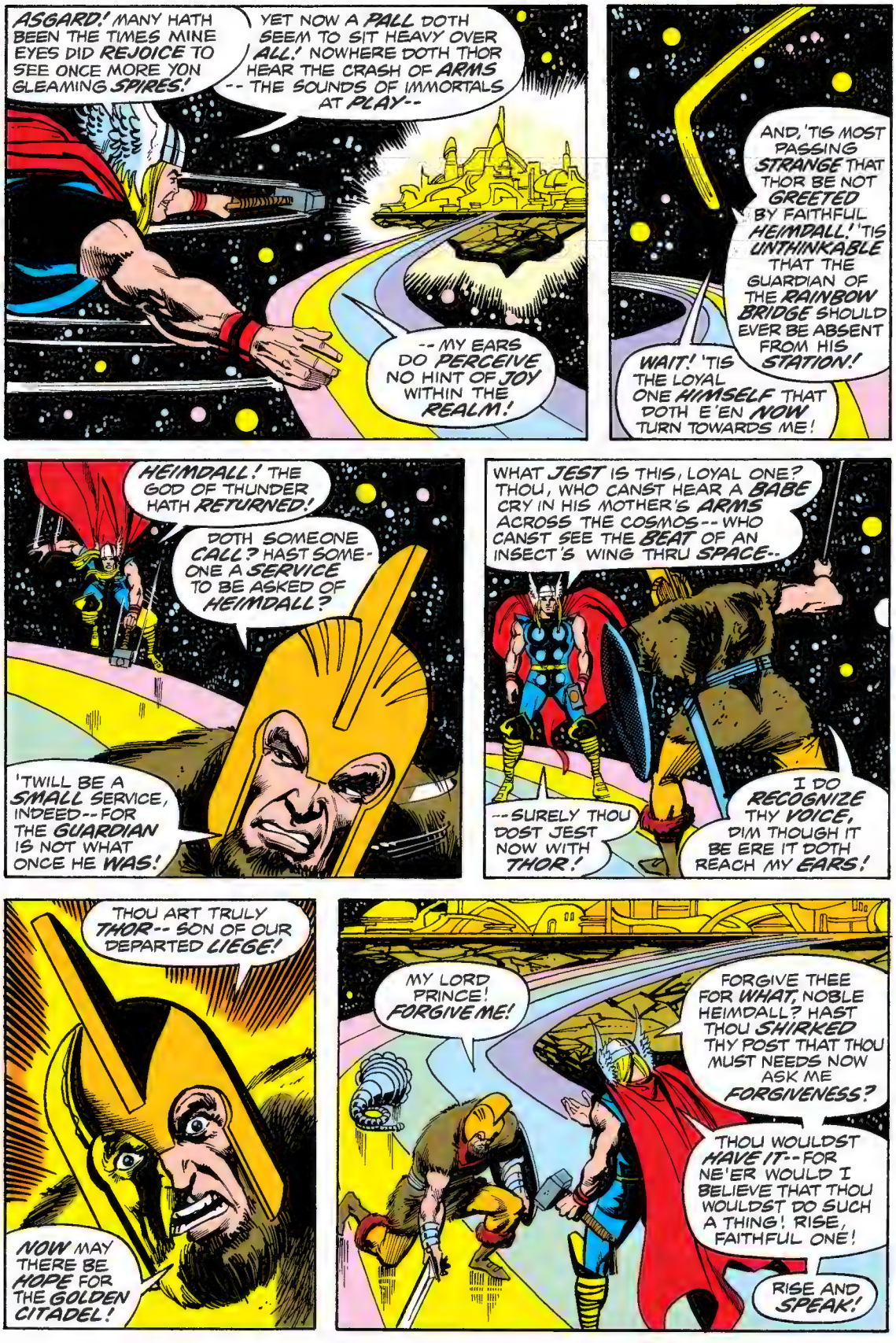
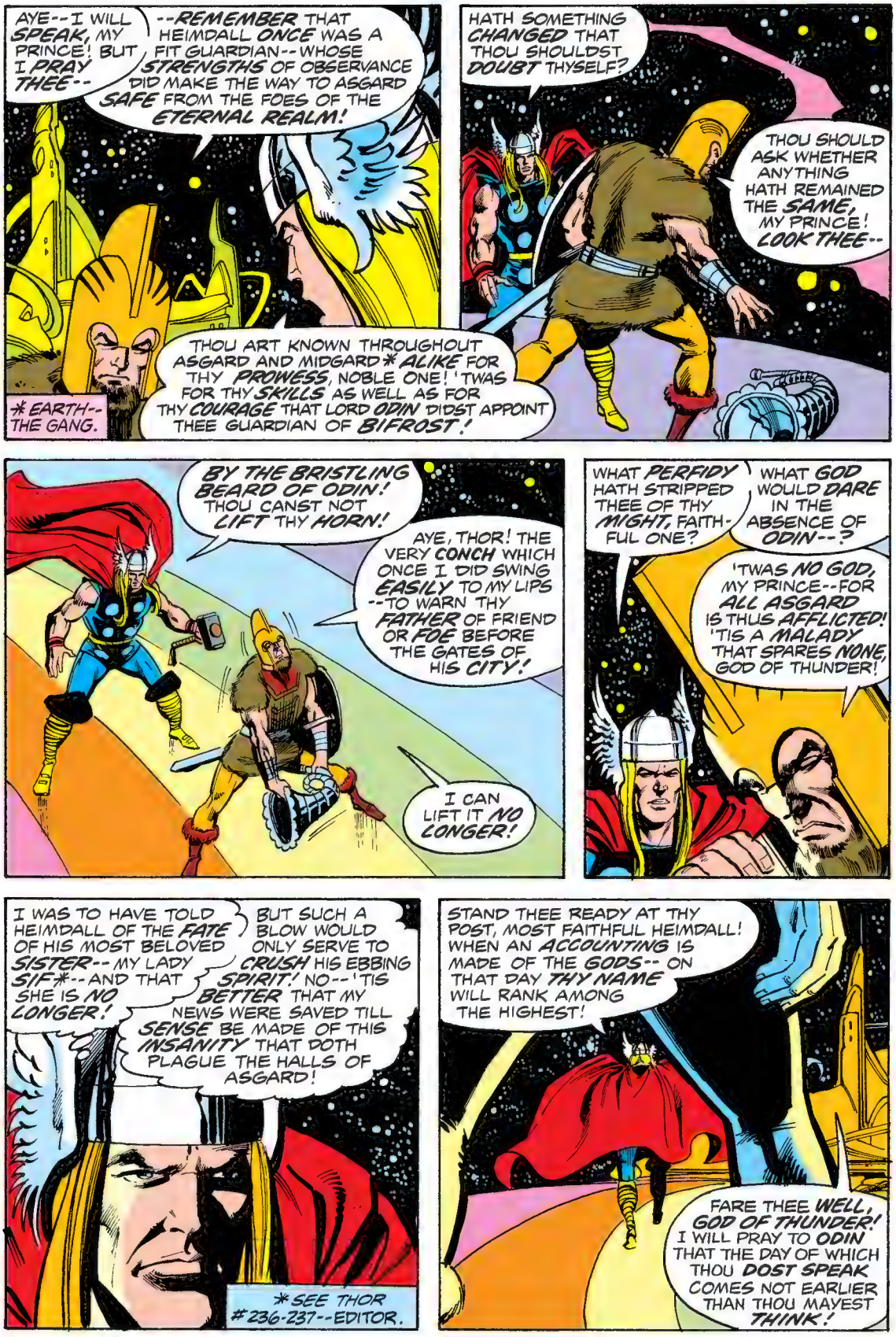
THE MIGHTY
THOR
RELEASE MY FATHER FROM THY BONDAGE, HORUS, OR FACE THE WRATH of THOR!
NAY, THUNDER-GOD! WITHOUT REGAL ODIN TO LEAD THEM THIS DAY--
--ALL THE LEGIONS OF ASGARD SHALL PERISH!
WHEN GODS MAKE WAR!

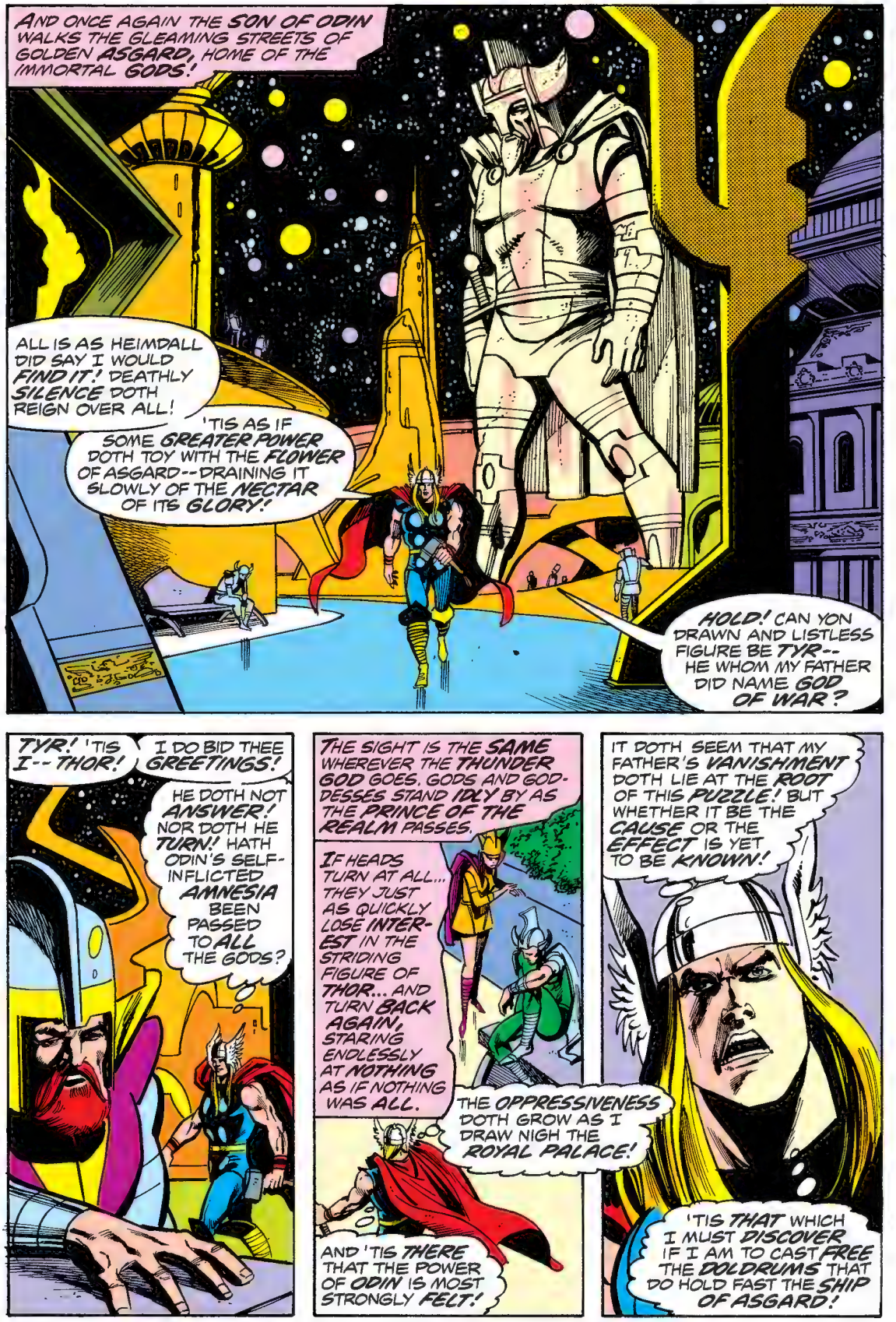
Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE MIGHTY THOR!™

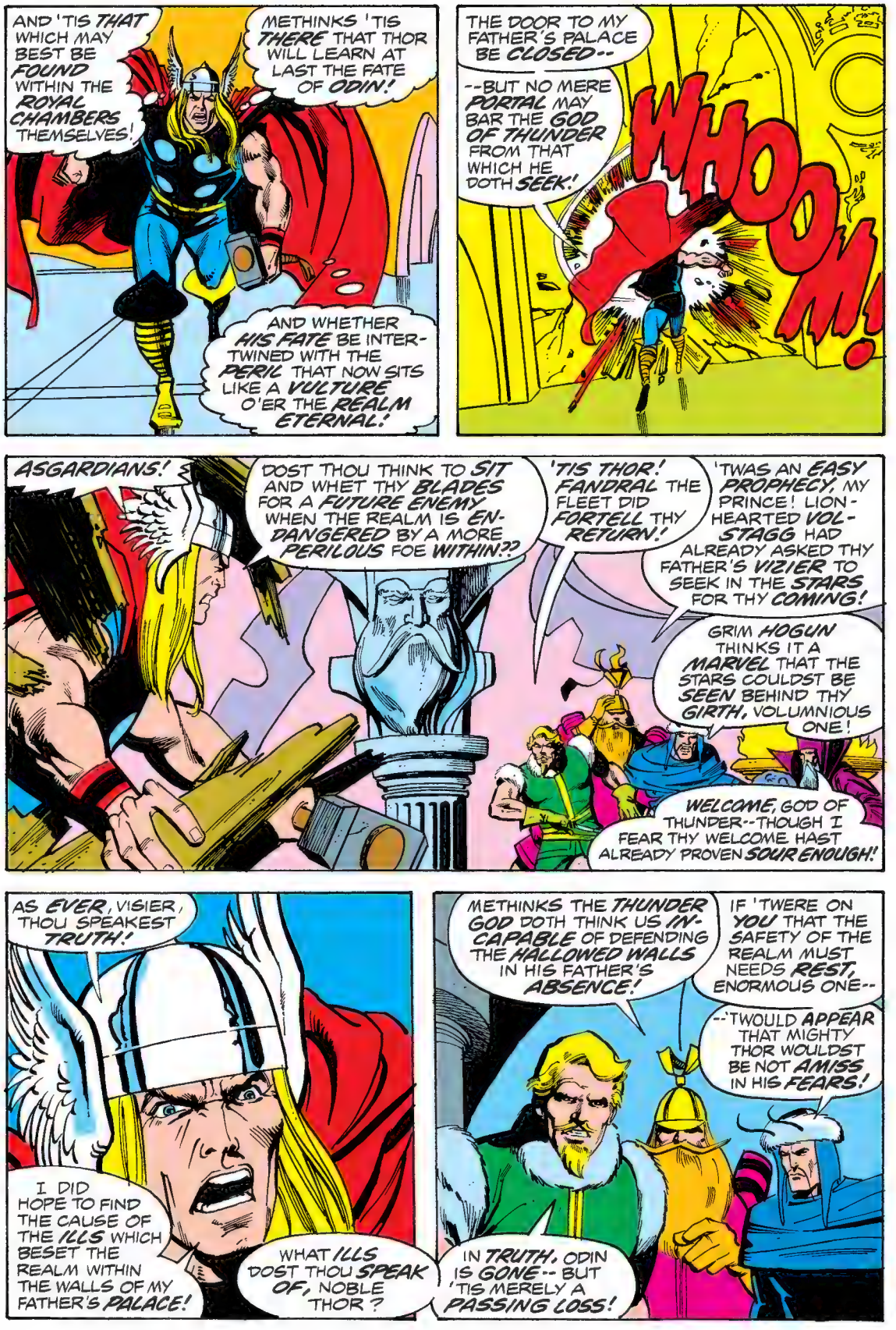
WHEN THE GODS MAKE WAR!

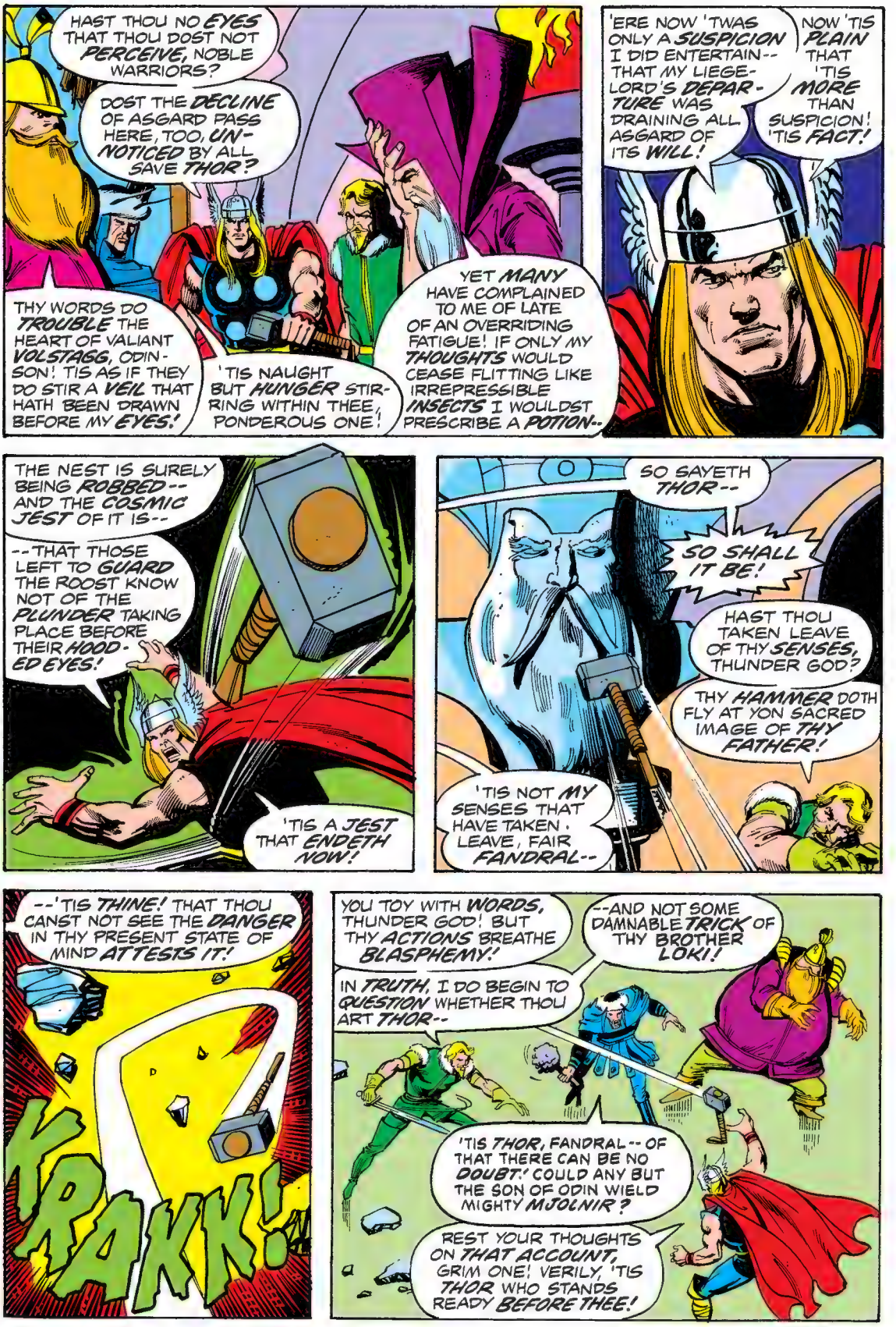

HARKEN YE, BELIEVERS, TO A TALE THAT ONLY RASCALLY ROY THOMAS COULD HAVE PLOTTED, SAL BUSCEMA AND KLAUS JANSON COULD HAVE DRAWN, JOHN COSTANZA COULD HAVE LETTERED, PHIL RACHELSON COULD HAVE COLORED...
...AND SOMEWHERE ALONG THE LINE EMBATTLED BILL MANTLO GOT HANDED THE JOB TO SCRIPT. SO BE IT!
THE SON OF ODIN HATH BEEN TOO LONG GONE FROM THE REALM ETERNAL!
YET, IN MY HEART, I KNOW THAT 'TIS IN ASGARD THOR MUST SEEK THE KEY TO THE DISAPPEARANCE OF ODIN!
'TIS TIME THE GOD OF THUNDER RETURNED HOME!
EDITED BY: ROY THOMAS, MARV WOLFMAN & LEN WEIN, TRIUMVIRATE OF TAMPERERS.


ASGARD! MANY HATH BEEN THE TIMES MINE EYES DID REJOICE TO SEE ONCE MORE YON GLEAMING SPIRES!
YET NOW A PALL DOTH SEEM TO SIT HEAVY OVER ALL! NOWHERE DOTH THOR HEAR THE CRASH OF ARMS -- THE SOUNDS OF IMMORTALS AT PLAY--
-- MY EARS DO PERCEIVE NO HINT OF JOY WITHIN THE REALM!
AND, 'TIS MOST PASSING STRANGE THAT THOR BE NOT GREETED BY FAITHFUL HEIMDALL! 'TIS UNTHINKABLE THAT THE GUARDIAN OF THE RAINBOW BRIDGE SHOULD EVER BE ABSENT FROM HIS STATION!
WAIT! 'TIS THE LOYAL ONE HIMSELF THAT DOTH E'EN NOW TURN TOWARDS ME!
HEIMDALL! THE GOD OF THUNDER HATH RETURNED!
DOTH SOMEONE CALL? HAST SOMEONE A SERVICE TO BE ASKED OF HEIMDALL?
'TWILL BE A SMALL SERVICE, INDEED -- FOR THE GUARDIAN IS NOT WHAT ONCE HE WAS!
WHAT JEST IS THIS, LOYAL ONE? THOU, WHO CANST HEAR A BABE CRY IN HIS MOTHER'S ARMS ACROSS THE COSMOS -- WHO CANST SEE THE BEAT OF AN INSECT'S WING THRU SPACE--
--SURELY THOU DOST JEST NOW WITH THOR!
I DO RECOGNIZE THY VOICE, DIM THOUGH IT BE ERE IT DOTH REACH MY EARS!
THOU ART TRULY THOR -- SON OF OUR DEPARTED LIEGE!
NOW MAY THERE BE HOPE FOR THE GOLDEN CITADEL!
MY LORD PRINCE! FORGIVE ME!
FORGIVE THEE FOR WHAT, NOBLE HEIMDALL? HAST THOU SHIRKED THY POST THAT THOU MUST NEEDS NOW ASK ME FORGIVENESS?
THOU WOULDST HAVE IT -- FOR NE'ER WOULD I BELIEVE THAT THOU WOULDST DO SUCH A THING! RISE, FAITHFUL ONE!
RISE AND SPEAK!

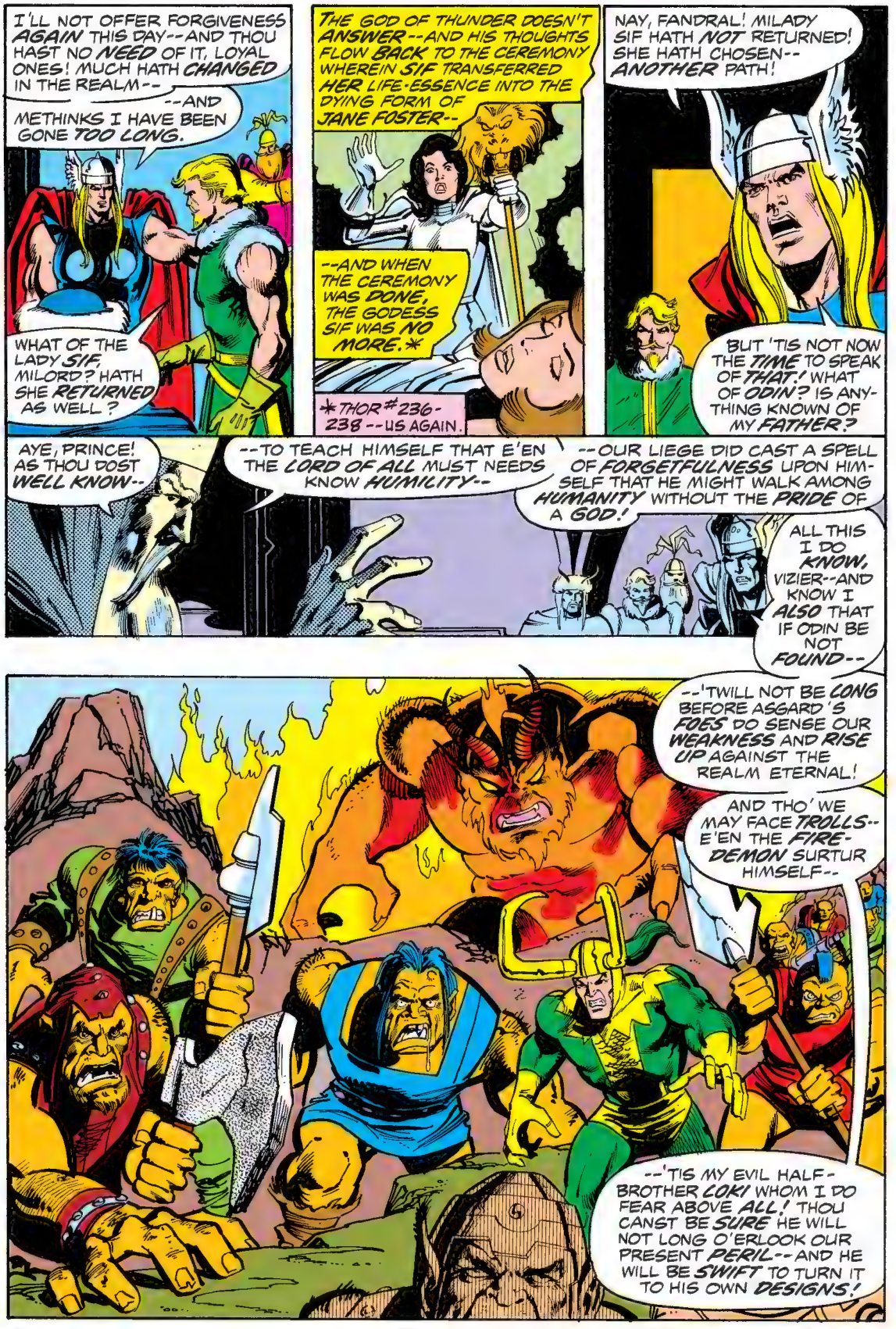

AYE--I WILL SPEAK, MY PRINCE! BUT I PRAY THEE--
--REMEMBER THAT HEIMDALL ONCE WAS A FIT GUARDIAN--WHOSE STRENGTHS OF OBSERVANCE DID MAKE THE WAY TO ASGARD SAFE FROM THE FOES OF THE ETERNAL REALM!
THOU ART KNOWN THROUGHOUT ASGARD AND MIDGARD* ALIKE FOR THY PROWESS, NOBLE ONE! 'TWAS FOR THY SKILLS AS WELL AS FOR THY COURAGE THAT LORD ODIN DIDST APPOINT THEE GUARDIAN OF BIFROST!
*EARTH--THE GANG.
HATH SOMETHING CHANGED THAT THOU SHOULDST DOUBT THYSELF?
THOU SHOULD ASK WHETHER ANYTHING HATH REMAINED THE SAME, MY PRINCE! LOOK THEE--
BY THE BRISTLING BEARD OF ODIN! THOU CANST NOT LIFT THY HORN!
AYE, THOR! THE VERY CONCH WHICH ONCE I DID SWING EASILY TO MY LIPS --TO WARN THY FATHER OF FRIEND OR FOE BEFORE THE GATES OF HIS CITY!
I CAN LIFT IT NO LONGER!
WHAT PERFIDY HATH STRIPPED THEE OF THY MIGHT, FAITHFUL ONE?
WHAT GOD WOULD DARE IN THE ABSENCE OF ODIN--?
'TWAS NO GOD, MY PRINCE--FOR ALL ASGARD IS THUS AFFLICTED! 'TIS A MALADY THAT SPARES NONE, GOD OF THUNDER!
I WAS TO HAVE TOLD HEIMDALL OF THE FATE OF HIS MOST BELOVED SISTER-- MY LADY SIF*--AND THAT SHE IS NO LONGER!
BUT SUCH A BLOW WOULD ONLY SERVE TO CRUSH HIS EBBING SPIRIT! NO--'TIS BETTER THAT MY NEWS WERE SAVED TILL SENSE BE MADE OF THIS INSANITY THAT DOTH PLAGUE THE HALLS OF ASGARD!
*SEE THOR #236-237--EDITOR.
STAND THEE READY AT THY POST, MOST FAITHFUL HEIMDALL! WHEN AN ACCOUNTING IS MADE OF THE GODS-- ON THAT DAY THY NAME WILL RANK AMONG THE HIGHEST!
FARE THEE WELL, GOD OF THUNDER! I WILL PRAY TO ODIN THAT THE DAY OF WHICH THOU DOST SPEAK COMES NOT EARLIER THAN THOU MAYEST THINK!

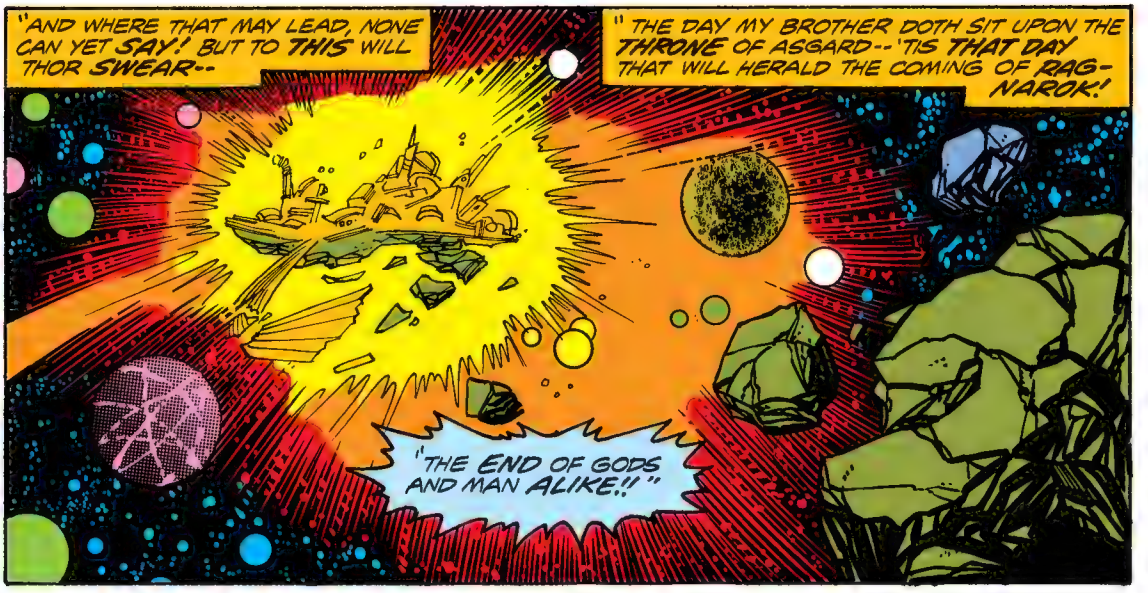

AND ONCE AGAIN THE SON OF ODIN WALKS THE GLEAMING STREETS OF GOLDEN ASGARD, HOME OF THE IMMORTAL GODS!
ALL IS AS HEIMDALL DID SAY I WOULD FIND IT! DEATHLY SILENCE DOTH REIGN OVER ALL!
'TIS AS IF SOME GREATER POWER DOTH TOY WITH THE FLOWER OF ASGARD--DRAINING IT SLOWLY OF THE NECTAR OF ITS GLORY!
HOLD! CAN YON DRAWN AND LISTLESS FIGURE BE TYR--HE WHOM MY FATHER DID NAME GOD OF WAR?
TYR! 'TIS I--THOR!
I DO BID THEE GREETINGS!
HE DOTH NOT ANSWER! NOR DOTH HE TURN! HATH ODIN'S SELF-INFLICTED AMNESIA BEEN PASSED TO ALL THE GODS?
THE SIGHT IS THE SAME WHEREVER THE THUNDER GOD GOES. GODS AND GODDESSES STAND IDLY BY AS THE PRINCE OF THE REALM PASSES.
IF HEADS TURN AT ALL... THEY JUST AS QUICKLY LOSE INTEREST IN THE STRIDING FIGURE OF THOR... AND TURN BACK AGAIN, STARING ENDLESSLY AT NOTHING AS IF NOTHING WAS ALL.
THE OPPRESSIVENESS DOTH GROW AS I DRAW NIGH THE ROYAL PALACE!
AND 'TIS THERE THAT THE POWER OF ODIN IS MOST STRONGLY FELT!
IT DOTH SEEM THAT MY FATHER'S VANISHMENT DOTH LIE AT THE ROOT OF THIS PUZZLE! BUT WHETHER IT BE THE CAUSE OR THE EFFECT IS YET TO BE KNOWN!
'TIS THAT WHICH I MUST DISCOVER IF I AM TO CAST FREE THE DOLDRUMS THAT DO HOLD FAST THE SHIP OF ASGARD!


AND 'TIS THAT WHICH MAY BEST BE FOUND WITHIN THE ROYAL CHAMBERS THEMSELVES!
METHINKS 'TIS THERE THAT THOR WILL LEARN AT LAST THE FATE OF ODIN!
AND WHETHER HIS FATE BE INTERTWINED WITH THE PERIL THAT NOW SITS LIKE A VULTURE O'ER THE REALM ETERNAL!
THE DOOR TO MY FATHER'S PALACE BE CLOSED--
--BUT NO MERE PORTAL MAY BAR THE GOD OF THUNDER FROM THAT WHICH HE DOTH SEEK!
WHOOM!
ASGARDIANS!
DOST THOU THINK TO SIT AND WHET THY BLADES FOR A FUTURE ENEMY WHEN THE REALM IS ENDANGERED BY A MORE PERILOUS FOE WITHIN??
'TIS THOR! FANDRAL THE FLEET DID FORTELL THY RETURN!
'TWAS AN EASY PROPHECY, MY PRINCE! LION-HEARTED VOLSTAGG HAD ALREADY ASKED THY FATHER'S VIZIER TO SEEK IN THE STARS FOR THY COMING!
GRIM HOGUN THINKS IT A MARVEL THAT THE STARS COULDST BE SEEN BEHIND THY GIRTH, VOLUMNIOUS ONE!
WELCOME, GOD OF THUNDER--THOUGH I FEAR THY WELCOME HAST ALREADY PROVEN SOUR ENOUGH!
AS EVER, VISIER, THOU SPEAKEST TRUTH!
I DID HOPE TO FIND THE CAUSE OF THE ILLS WHICH BESET THE REALM WITHIN THE WALLS OF MY FATHER'S PALACE!
WHAT ILLS DOST THOU SPEAK OF, NOBLE THOR?
METHINKS THE THUNDER GOD DOTH THINK US INCAPABLE OF DEFENDING THE HALLOWED WALLS IN HIS FATHER'S ABSENCE!
IF 'TWERE ON YOU THAT THE SAFETY OF THE REALM MUST NEEDS REST, ENORMOUS ONE--
--'TWOULD APPEAR THAT MIGHTY THOR WOULDST BE NOT AMISS IN HIS FEARS!
IN TRUTH, ODIN IS GONE-- BUT 'TIS MERELY A PASSING LOSS!


HAST THOU NO EYES THAT THOU DOST NOT PERCEIVE, NOBLE WARRIORS?
DOST THE DECLINE OF ASGARD PASS HERE, TOO, UNNOTICED BY ALL SAVE THOR?
THY WORDS DO TROUBLE THE HEART OF VALIANT VOLSTAGG, ODINSON! TIS AS IF THEY DO STIR A VEIL THAT HATH BEEN DRAWN BEFORE MY EYES!
'TIS NAUGHT BUT HUNGER STIRRING WITHIN THEE, PONDEROUS ONE!
YET MANY HAVE COMPLAINED TO ME OF LATE OF AN OVERRIDING FATIGUE! IF ONLY MY THOUGHTS WOULD CEASE FLITTING LIKE IRREPRESSIBLE INSECTS I WOULDST PRESCRIBE A POTION--
'ERE NOW 'TWAS ONLY A SUSPICION I DID ENTERTAIN-- THAT MY LIEGE-LORD'S DEPARTURE WAS DRAINING ALL ASGARD OF ITS WILL!
NOW 'TIS PLAIN THAT 'TIS MORE THAN SUSPICION! 'TIS FACT!
THE NEST IS SURELY BEING ROBBED-- AND THE COSMIC JEST OF IT IS--
--THAT THOSE LEFT TO GUARD THE ROOST KNOW NOT OF THE PLUNDER TAKING PLACE BEFORE THEIR HOODED EYES!
'TIS A JEST THAT ENDETH NOW!
SO SAYETH THOR--
SO SHALL IT BE!
HAST THOU TAKEN LEAVE OF THY SENSES, THUNDER GOD?
THY HAMMER DOTH FLY AT YON SACRED IMAGE OF THY FATHER!
'TIS NOT MY SENSES THAT HAVE TAKEN. LEAVE, FAIR FANDRAL--
--'TIS THINE! THAT THOU CANST NOT SEE THE DANGER IN THY PRESENT STATE OF MIND ATTESTS IT!
KRAKK!
YOU TOY WITH WORDS, THUNDER GOD! BUT THY ACTIONS BREATHE BLASPHEMY!
--AND NOT SOME DAMNABLE TRICK OF THY BROTHER LOKI!
IN TRUTH, I DO BEGIN TO QUESTION WHETHER THOU ART THOR--
'TIS THOR, FANDRAL-- OF THAT THERE CAN BE NO DOUBT! COULD ANY BUT THE SON OF ODIN WIELD MIGHTY MJOLNIR?
REST YOUR THOUGHTS ON THAT ACCOUNT, GRIM ONE! VERILY, 'TIS THOR WHO STANDS READY BEFORE THEE!

THEN, IF THOU ART THOR-- 'TIS MADNESS THAT WE FACE! ONLY SOME EVIL SPELL COULDST CAUSE THEE TO ATTACK US-- WE WHO ART THY FRIENDS!
AND, IN THE FACE OF MAGIC, VOLSTAGG IS POWERLESS! I'LL STAND ME BACK, BROTHERS--AND CONCEIVE NEWER STRATEGIES FOR RETURNING OUR PRINCE TO HIS RIGHT MIND!
STAND THEE FAR BACK, QUIVERING ONE! THY SHADOW DULLS THE GLEAM OF FANDRAL'S BLADE!
HOGUN'S POUNDING MACE WILL TAKE THY PLACE, THOU OVERSTUFFED CABBAGE!
THOU DOST ATTACK??
CLEARLY, THEN, THO' THY ALERTNESS HATH BEEN SAPPED BY WHATEVER POWER DOTH DRAIN THE LIFE-FORCE FROM WEAKENING ASGARD--
--THY STRENGTH HATH NOT BEEN IMPAIRED! IT DOTH PAIN ME TO STRIKE AT THEE, WARRIOR--
WHAM!
--BUT I FEAR 'TIS THE ONLY WAY TO OPEN THINE EYES TO THAT WHICH IS BEFORE THEM--
--BUT THAT WHICH THEY DO NOT SEE!
THOU DOST CLUTCH AT THINE HEADS, AS IF THE SICKNESS HAD CHOSEN THERE TO LODGE!
MY THOUGHTS DO WHIRL AS IF CAUGHT IN THE GRIPS OF A MAELSTROM--
--MY HEAD DOTH SCREAM!
AND WHEN THE WHIRLING STOPS.
THOR! MY LORD!
FORGIVE US! WE DID NOT KNOW--!

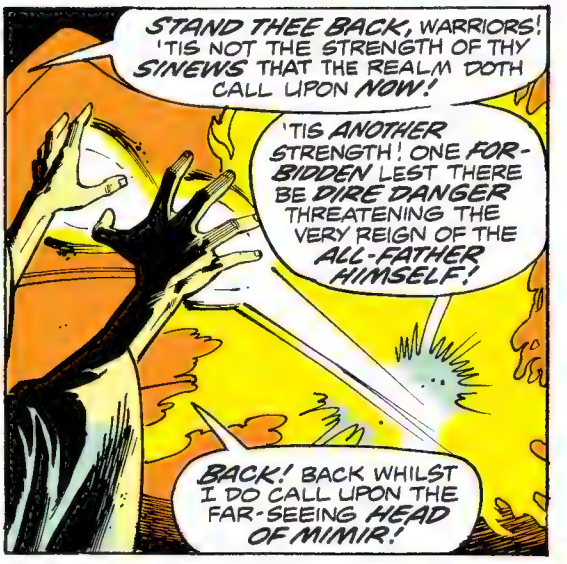

I'LL NOT OFFER FORGIVENESS AGAIN THIS DAY--AND THOU HAST NO NEED OF IT, LOYAL ONES! MUCH HATH CHANGED IN THE REALM--
--AND METHINKS I HAVE BEEN GONE TOO LONG.
WHAT OF THE LADY SIF, MILORD? HATH SHE RETURNED AS WELL?
THE GOD OF THUNDER DOESN'T ANSWER--AND HIS THOUGHTS FLOW BACK TO THE CEREMONY WHEREIN SIF TRANSFERRED HER LIFE-ESSENCE INTO THE DYING FORM OF JANE FOSTER--
--AND WHEN THE CEREMONY WAS DONE, THE GODESS SIF WAS NO MORE.*
*THOR #236-238--US AGAIN.
NAY, FANDRAL! MILADY SIF HATH NOT RETURNED! SHE HATH CHOSEN--ANOTHER PATH!
BUT 'TIS NOT NOW THE TIME TO SPEAK OF THAT! WHAT OF ODIN? IS ANYTHING KNOWN OF MY FATHER?
AYE, PRINCE! AS THOU DOST WELL KNOW--
--TO TEACH HIMSELF THAT E'EN THE LORD OF ALL MUST NEEDS KNOW HUMILITY--
--OUR LIEGE DID CAST A SPELL OF FORGETFULNESS UPON HIMSELF THAT HE MIGHT WALK AMONG HUMANITY WITHOUT THE PRIDE OF A GOD!
ALL THIS I DO KNOW, VIZIER--AND KNOW I ALSO THAT IF ODIN BE NOT FOUND--
--'TWILL NOT BE LONG BEFORE ASGARD'S FOES DO SENSE OUR WEAKNESS AND RISE UP AGAINST THE REALM ETERNAL!
AND THO' WE MAY FACE TROLLS--E'EN THE FIRE-DEMON SURTUR HIMSELF--
--'TIS MY EVIL HALF-BROTHER LOKI WHOM I DO FEAR ABOVE ALL! THOU CANST BE SURE HE WILL NOT LONG O'ERLOOK OUR PRESENT PERIL--AND HE WILL BE SWIFT TO TURN IT TO HIS OWN DESIGNS!

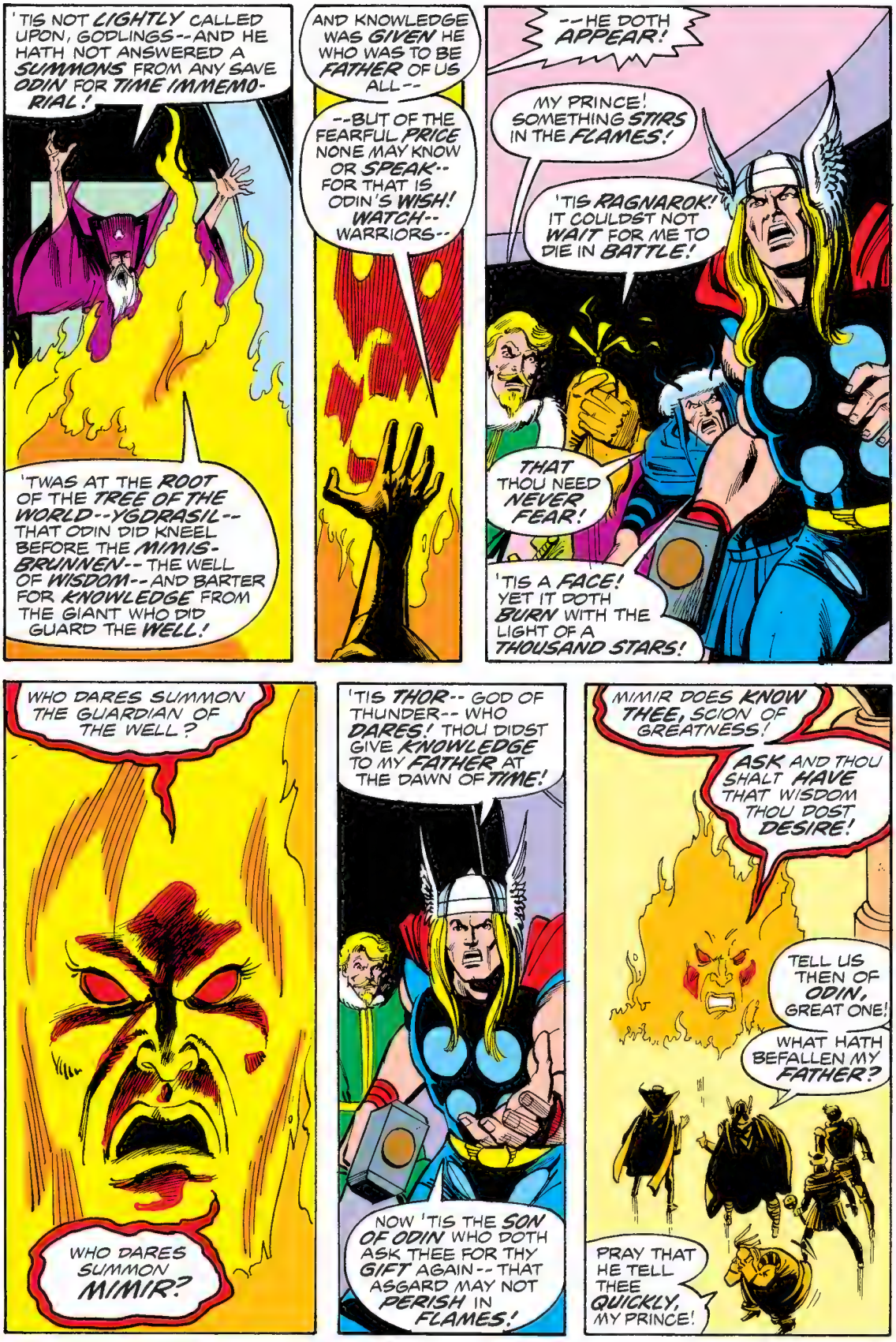

"AND WHERE THAT MAY LEAD, NONE CAN YET SAY! BUT TO THIS WILL THOR SWEAR--
" THE DAY MY BROTHER DOTH SIT UPON THE THRONE OF ASGARD--'TIS THAT DAY THAT WILL HERALD THE COMING OF RAG-NARÖK!
"THE END OF GODS AND MAN ALIKE!! "

NEVER! AS LONG AS THERE BE LIFE IN FANDRAL--SUCH EVIL WILL NOT BE!
THY WORDS ECHO THE CRY THAT DOTH LEAP TO VOLSTAGG'S TONGUE!
'TIS MORE THAN LIKELY INDIGESTION, THOU BLIMP!
YET, HOGUN ALSO STANDS READY, THUNDER GOD! IF ASGARD FALLS HER ENEMIES WILL PAY A PRETTY PRICE!

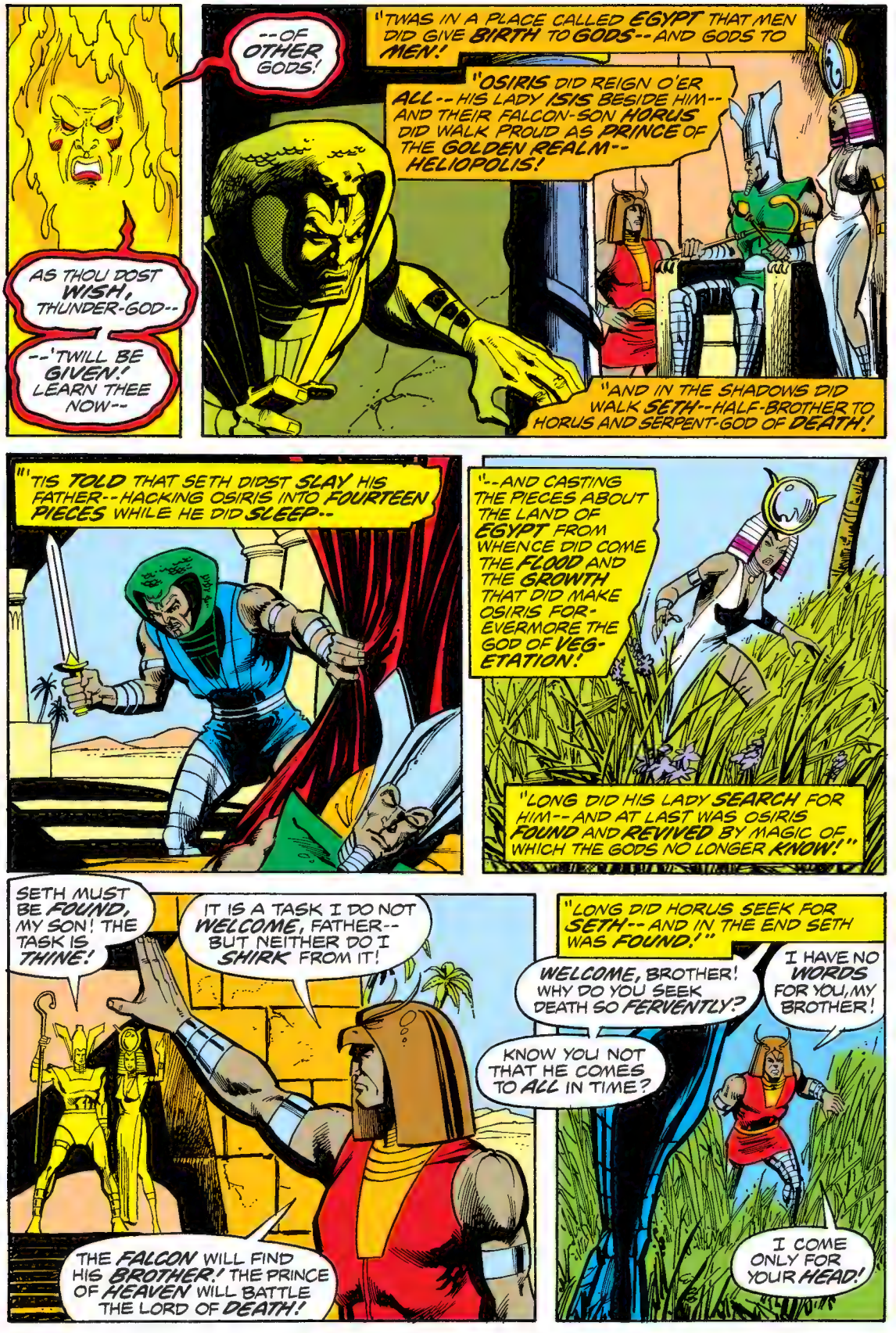
THOU HAST SUCCEEDED, PRINCE! THEY DO THROW OFF THEIR UNNATURAL LETHARGY AND PREPARE, AS OF OLD, TO MEET WHATE'ER FOE DOTH THREATEN THE REALM!
AS I DID HOPE, VIZIER!
YET, UNLESS ODIN BE FOUND--I FEAR THEY WILL LAPSE AGAIN!

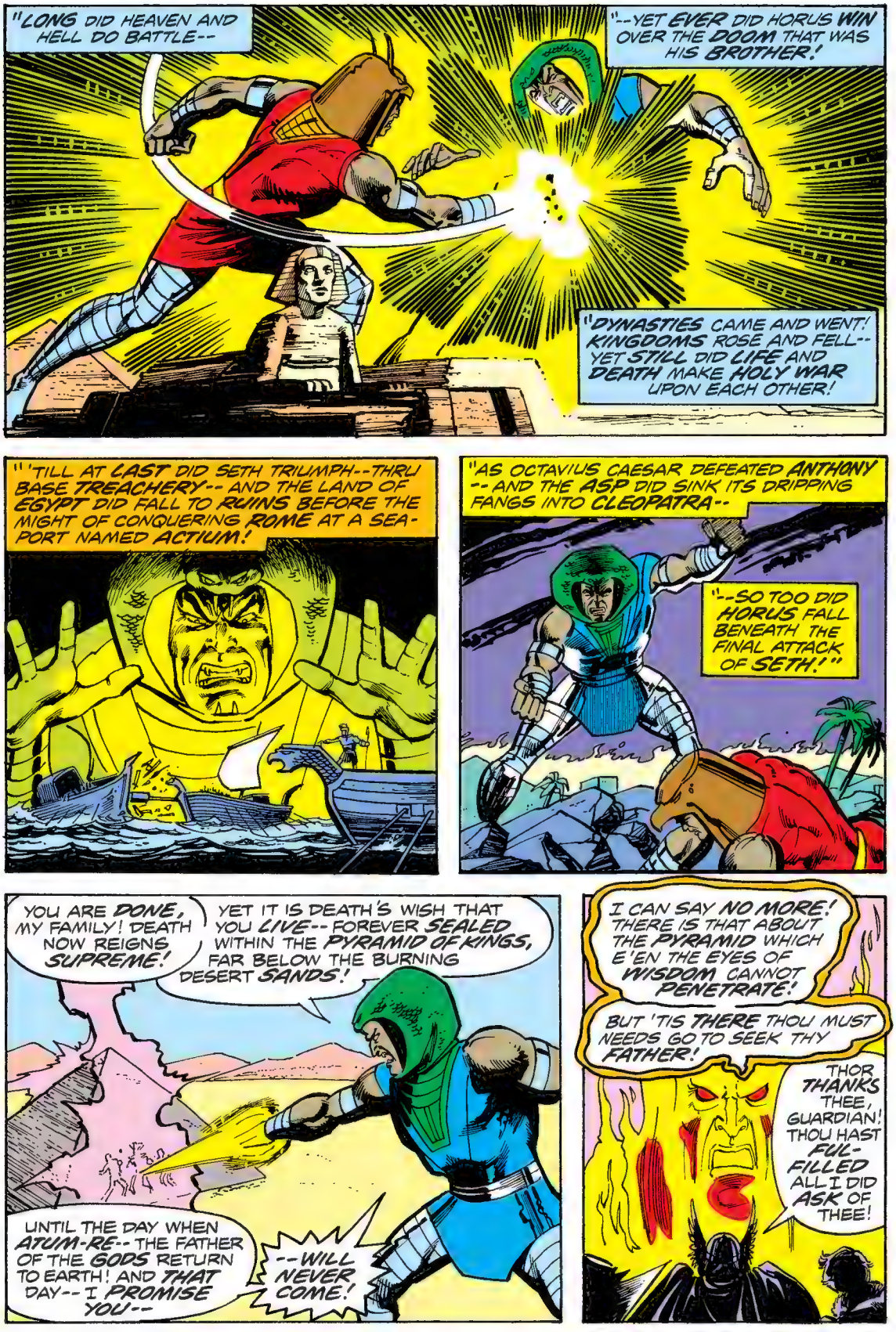
I DO SENSE TRUTH IN THY WORDS, MY LORD! 'TIS PLAIN TO ME NOW THAT, IN SOME UNFORE-SEEN MANNER, THE POWER OF THE REALM DOTH HANG IN BALANCE--
--WITH THE POWER OF THY FATHER! HIS WHERE-ABOUTS MUST BE ASCERTAINED!

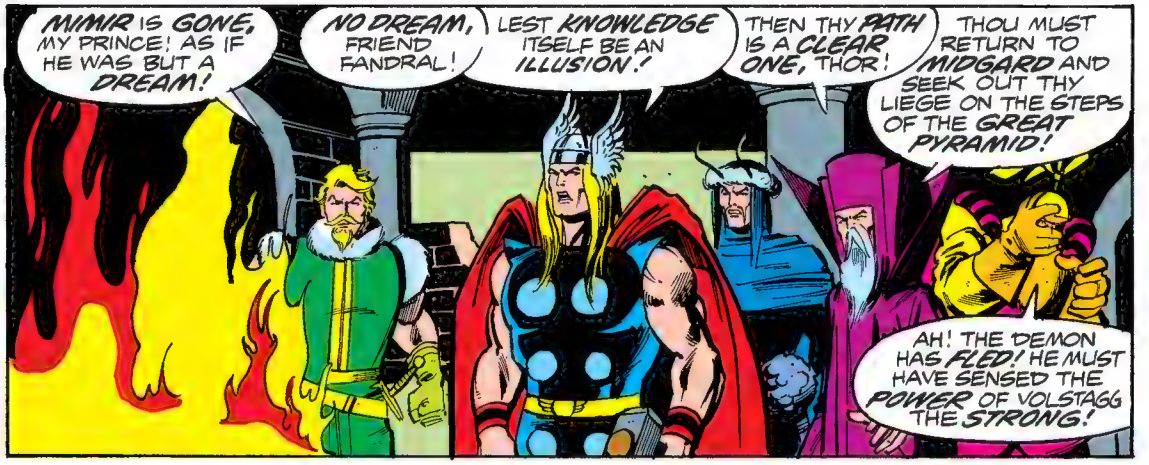

STAND THEE BACK, WARRIORS! 'TIS NOT THE STRENGTH OF THY SINEWS THAT THE REALM DOTH CALL UPON NOW!
'TIS ANOTHER STRENGTH! ONE FOR-BIDDEN LEST THERE BE DIRE DANGER THREATENING THE VERY REIGN OF THE ALL-FATHER HIMSELF!
BACK! BACK WHILST I DO CALL UPON THE FAR-SEEING HEAD OF MIMIR!


'TIS NOT LIGHTLY CALLED UPON, GODLINGS--AND HE HATH NOT ANSWERED A SUMMONS FROM ANY SAVE ODIN FOR TIME IMMEMORIAL!
'TWAS AT THE ROOT OF THE TREE OF THE WORLD--YGDRASIL--THAT ODIN DID KNEEL BEFORE THE MIMIS-BRUNNEN--THE WELL OF WISDOM--AND BARTER FOR KNOWLEDGE FROM THE GIANT WHO DID GUARD THE WELL!
AND KNOWLEDGE WAS GIVEN HE WHO WAS TO BE FATHER OF US ALL--
--BUT OF THE FEARFUL PRICE NONE MAY KNOW OR SPEAK--FOR THAT IS ODIN'S WISH! WATCH--WARRIORS--
--HE DOTH APPEAR!
MY PRINCE! SOMETHING STIRS IN THE FLAMES!
'TIS RAGNAROK! IT COULDST NOT WAIT FOR ME TO DIE IN BATTLE!
THAT THOU NEED NEVER FEAR!
'TIS A FACE! YET IT DOTH BURN WITH THE LIGHT OF A THOUSAND STARS!
WHO DARES SUMMON THE GUARDIAN OF THE WELL?
WHO DARES SUMMON MIMIR?
'TIS THOR--GOD OF THUNDER--WHO DARES! THOU DIDST GIVE KNOWLEDGE TO MY FATHER AT THE DAWN OF TIME!
NOW 'TIS THE SON OF ODIN WHO DOTH ASK THEE FOR THY GIFT AGAIN--THAT ASGARD MAY NOT PERISH IN FLAMES!
MIMIR DOES KNOW THEE, SCION OF GREATNESS!
ASK AND THOU SHALT HAVE THAT WISDOM THOU DOST DESIRE!
TELL US THEN OF ODIN, GREAT ONE!
WHAT HATH BEFALLEN MY FATHER?
PRAY THAT HE TELL THEE QUICKLY, MY PRINCE!

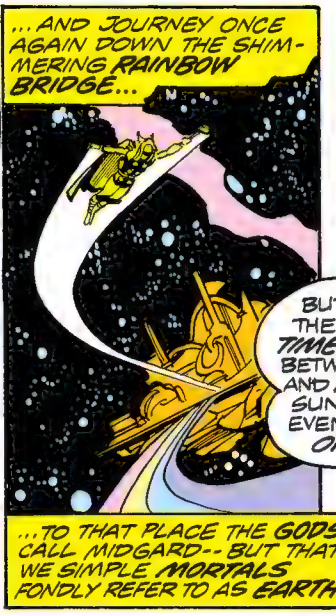
"SILENCE, TOAD! GAZE THEE WITHIN MY FLAME, SON OF ASGARD! THERE THOU WILL SEE THY FATHER!"
THE FLAME GIVES WAY TO AN IMAGE OF CALIFORNIA, AND THE BEGINNINGS OF UNIONIZED LABOR IN THE VINEYARDS OF THE WEST COAST.
I DO NOT UNDERSTAND, JUDITH! THESE MEN WORK FOR OTHER MEN-- YET THEY BE NOT REPAID WHEN 'TIS TIME TO GIVE THEM THEIR DUE!
IT'S CALLED CAPITALISM, ORRIN! THAT'S THE ONLY ANSWER I CAN GIVE YOU!
IT IS THE VINEYARDS TO WHICH ODIN HAS COME, HIS GODHOOD FORGOTTEN--AND IT IS THERE THAT HE SEES THAT THE PASSIONS OF MEN--
--ARE NOT VERY DIFFERENT FROM THE PASSIONS OF GODS!
THOU DOST SEEK TO HARM THY FELLOW FOR CLAIMING THAT WHICH BE RIGHTFULLY HIS--
--THOU ART TRULY MAD!
WAY TO GO, ORRIN! COMBACH'S GOONS ARE ON THE RUN!
STRIKE
BUT IT WASN'T THE WORKERS THAT CAUSED THE STRIKE-BREAKERS TO FLEE! IT WAS SOMETHING MORE--
--SOMETHING TOTALLY UNBELIEVABLE!
HOLY SMOKES! IT--IT'S A PYRAMID GROWIN' LIKE VESUVIUS IN THE MIDDLE O' THE GROVES!
MY FATHER! WHAT HATH BECOME OF ODIN?
'TIS MADNESS-- YET, THERE HE BE NOW!
CLIMBING THE STEPS OF YON PYRAMID AS IF HE BE ENTRANCED!
FOLLOWING THREE FIGURES WHO E'EN NOW DOTH TURN AND BID HIM ENTER AS THEY DISAPPEAR WITHIN!
THOU HATH EXPLAINED NOTHING, MIMIR!
HAVE A CARE, ODIN-SON! 'TIS NOT MY PART TO EXPLAIN-- MERELY TO OFFER WISDOM, THAT OTHERS MAY PARTAKE OF THAT WHICH THEY WISH!
OFFER ON THEN! THOR MUST NEEDS KNOW MORE!


--OF OTHER GODS!
AS THOU DOST WISH, THUNDER-GOD--
--'TWILL BE GIVEN! LEARN THEE NOW--
"TWAS IN A PLACE CALLED EGYPT THAT MEN DID GIVE BIRTH TO GODS--AND GODS TO MEN!
"OSIRIS DID REIGN O'ER ALL--HIS LADY ISIS BESIDE HIM--AND THEIR FALCON-SON HORUS DID WALK PROUD AS PRINCE OF THE GOLDEN REALM--HELIOPOLIS!
"AND IN THE SHADOWS DID WALK SETH--HALF-BROTHER TO HORUS AND SERPENT-GOD OF DEATH!
"'TIS TOLD THAT SETH DIDST SLAY HIS FATHER--HACKING OSIRIS INTO FOURTEEN PIECES WHILE HE DID SLEEP--
"--AND CASTING THE PIECES ABOUT THE LAND OF EGYPT FROM WHENCE DID COME THE FLOOD AND THE GROWTH THAT DID MAKE OSIRIS FOR-EVERMORE THE GOD OF VEG-ETATION!
"LONG DID HIS LADY SEARCH FOR HIM--AND AT LAST WAS OSIRIS FOUND AND REVIVED BY MAGIC OF WHICH THE GODS NO LONGER KNOW!"
SETH MUST BE FOUND, MY SON! THE TASK IS THINE!
IT IS A TASK I DO NOT WELCOME, FATHER--BUT NEITHER DO I SHIRK FROM IT!
THE FALCON WILL FIND HIS BROTHER! THE PRINCE OF HEAVEN WILL BATTLE THE LORD OF DEATH!
"LONG DID HORUS SEEK FOR SETH--AND IN THE END SETH WAS FOUND!"
WELCOME, BROTHER! WHY DO YOU SEEK DEATH SO FERVENTLY?
I HAVE NO WORDS FOR YOU, MY BROTHER!
KNOW YOU NOT THAT HE COMES TO ALL IN TIME?
I COME ONLY FOR YOUR HEAD!

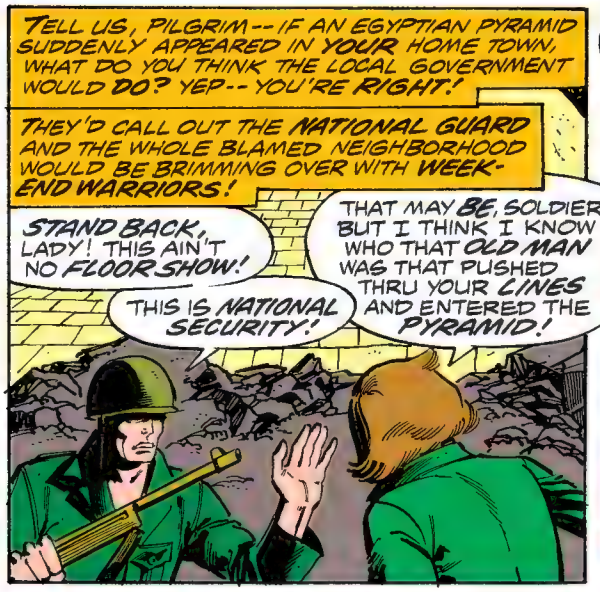

"LONG DID HEAVEN AND HELL DO BATTLE--
"--YET EVER DID HORUS WIN OVER THE DOOM THAT WAS HIS BROTHER!
"DYNASTIES CAME AND WENT! KINGDOMS ROSE AND FELL-- YET STILL DID LIFE AND DEATH MAKE HOLY WAR UPON EACH OTHER!
"'TILL AT LAST DID SETH TRIUMPH--THRU BASE TREACHERY-- AND THE LAND OF EGYPT DID FALL TO RUINS BEFORE THE MIGHT OF CONQUERING ROME AT A SEA-PORT NAMED ACTIUM!
"AS OCTAVIUS CAESAR DEFEATED ANTHONY -- AND THE ASP DID SINK ITS DRIPPING FANGS INTO CLEOPATRA--
"--SO TOO DID HORUS FALL BENEATH THE FINAL ATTACK OF SETH!'"
YOU ARE DONE, MY FAMILY! DEATH NOW REIGNS SUPREME!
YET IT IS DEATH'S WISH THAT YOU LIVE-- FOREVER SEALED WITHIN THE PYRAMID OF KINGS, FAR BELOW THE BURNING DESERT SANDS!
UNTIL THE DAY WHEN ATUM-RE-- THE FATHER OF THE GODS RETURN TO EARTH! AND THAT DAY-- I PROMISE YOU--
--WILL NEVER COME!
I CAN SAY NO MORE! THERE IS THAT ABOUT THE PYRAMID WHICH E'EN THE EYES OF WISDOM CANNOT PENETRATE!
BUT 'TIS THERE THOU MUST NEEDS GO TO SEEK THY FATHER!
THOR THANKS THEE, GUARDIAN! THOU HAST FULFILLED ALL I DID ASK OF THEE!


NIMIR IS GONE, MY PRINCE! AS IF HE WAS BUT A DREAM!
NO DREAM, FRIEND FANDRAL!
LEST KNOWLEDGE ITSELF BE AN ILLUSION!
THEN THY PATH IS A CLEAR ONE, THOR!
THOU MUST RETURN TO MIDGARD AND SEEK OUT THY LIEGE ON THE STEPS OF THE GREAT PYRAMID!
AH! THE DEMON HAS FLED! HE MUST HAVE SENSED THE POWER OF VOLSTAGG THE STRONG!

THEN 'TIS IN THY HANDS, ENORMOUS ONE, THAT THOR DOTH PLACE THE SAFETY OF THE REALM TILL HE DOTH RETURN!
HOGUN AND FANDRAL MAYEST BACK THEE --THO' FROM THY WORDS THOU WILL SURELY HAVE STRENGTH ENOW TO BRAVE ANY AND ALL ATTACKS!
SAVE THE PANGS OF HUNGER, MILORD!
BUT LET US NOW TAKE LEAVE OF A QUIVERING VOLSTAGG...

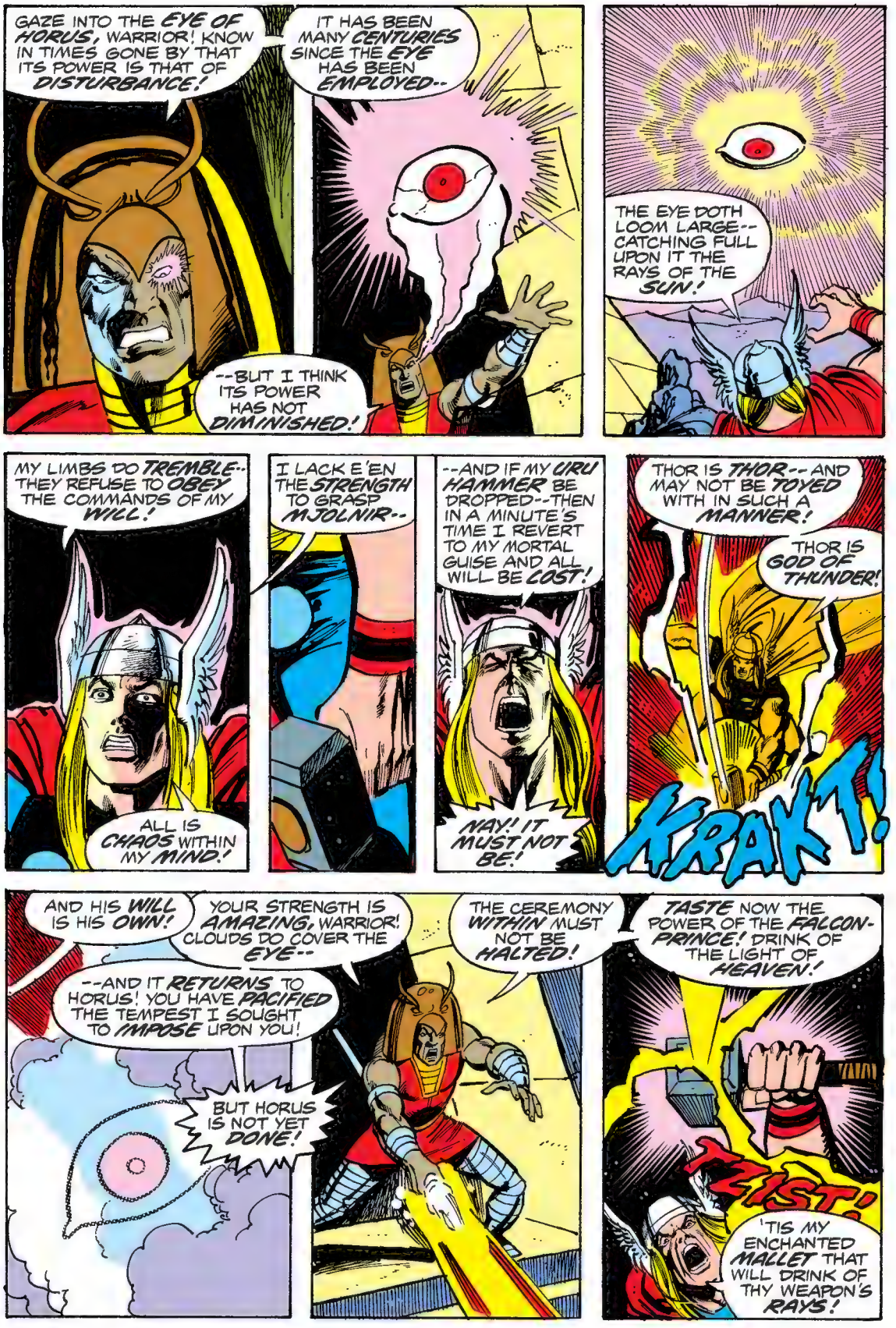

...AND JOURNEY ONCE AGAIN DOWN THE SHIMMERING RAINBOW BRIDGE...
...TO THAT PLACE THE GODS CALL MIDGARD--BUT THAT WE SIMPLE MORTALS FONDLY REFER TO AS EARTH.

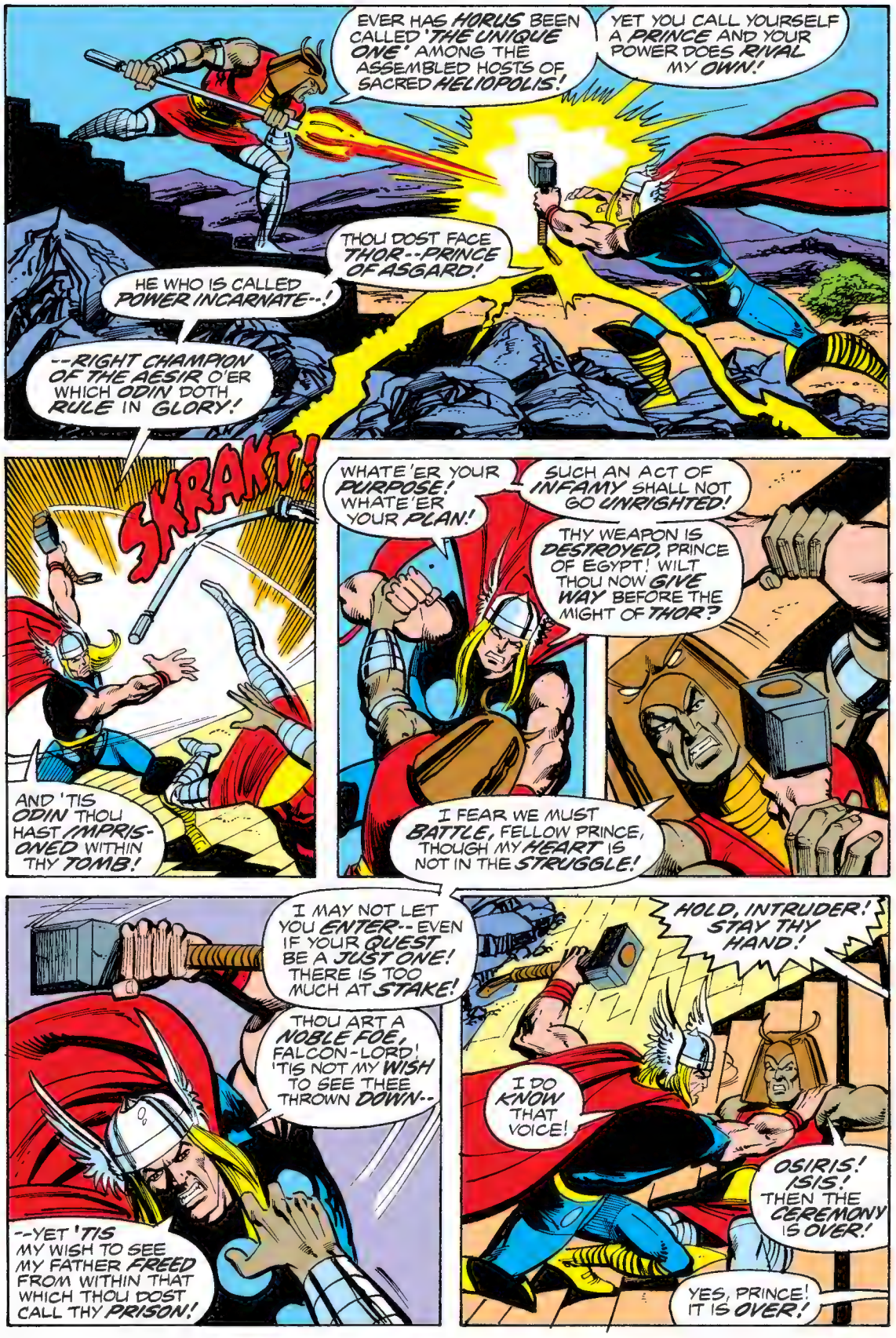
OR TO PINPOINT OUR TOUCHDOWN A LITTLE MORE SPECIFICALLY... THE OUTSKIRTS OF SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA.
I TOOK THE FIRST PLANE OUT TO THE COAST EXPECTING IT TO BE NIGHT WHEN I GOT HERE--
BUT I FORGOT THE 3-HOUR TIME DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HERE AND N.Y.! THE SUN HASN'T EVEN SET--OH!
THERE'S THE PYRAMID!

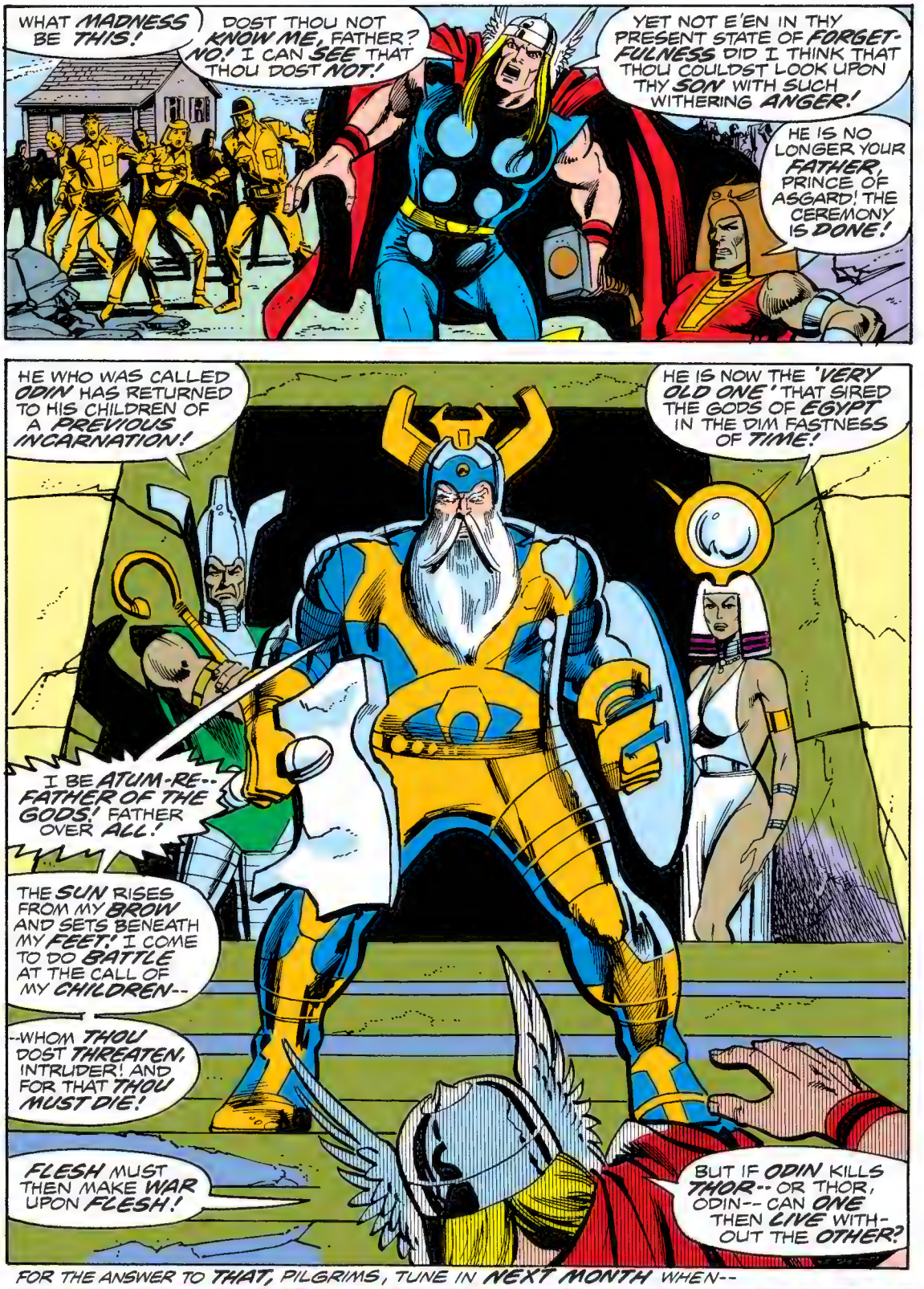

TELL US, PILGRIM--IF AN EGYPTIAN PYRAMID SUDDENLY APPEARED IN YOUR HOME TOWN, WHAT DO YOU THINK THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT WOULD DO? YEP--YOU'RE RIGHT!
THEY'D CALL OUT THE NATIONAL GUARD AND THE WHOLE BLAMED NEIGHBORHOOD WOULD BE BRIMMING OVER WITH WEEK-END WARRIORS!
STAND BACK, LADY! THIS AIN'T NO FLOOR SHOW!
THAT MAY BE, SOLDIER! BUT I THINK I KNOW WHO THAT OLD MAN WAS THAT PUSHED THRU YOUR LINES AND ENTERED THE PYRAMID!
THIS IS NATIONAL SECURITY!

INDEED THOU DOST KNOW HIM WELL, MILADY!
THOR! THEN YOU DID SEE THE NEWSCAST! *
HOLY CATFISH! THERE AIN'T NUTHIN' IN MY MANUAL COVERIN' HIM!
* LAST ISH--GUESS WHO?

AYE, MORTAL! THE UNKNOWN DOTH EVER GO UNPREPARED FOR!
AS TO THEE, JANE FOSTER! THERE BE OTHER MEANS OF COMMUNICATION FAR SURPASSING TELEVISION!
YOU'RE HERE, THOR! THAT'S ALL THAT MATTERS!
NOT TO ME IT AIN'T! I KNOW YOU GOT AN A-1 AVENGER'S PRIORITY, GOLDILOCKS! BUT THIS IS MY SHOW AND IT'S GONNA BE RUN IN TIGHT MILITARY FASHION!
THOU KNOWEST NOT WHEREOF THOU DOST SPEAK MORTAL!
AND THY TONE DOST SMACK OF DISRESPECT!
THOR! WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?!
HEY--!
WHAT MUST NEEDS BE DONE, MILADY!
MY FATHER BE NOT HIS TRUE SELF--'TIS EVIDENCED BY THE MANNER IN WHICH HE DID ALLOW HIMSELF TO BE ENTRANCED!
SO THOR MUST ACT FOR ODIN!
THO' THIS EDIFICE BE OF SOLID STONE AND ITS ROOTS SUNK THRU THE EARTH--
KHROOM!
--'TIS WITHIN IT THAT MY LORD WILL BE FOUND!
THUS 'TIS WITHIN THAT THOR MUST GO TO SEEK HIM OUT!
MJOLNIR HATH DONE ITS WORK! A PORTAL DOST APPEAR NEAR THE APEX OF THE STRUCTURE! A FIGURE DOTH EMERGE!
MY ENEMY DOTH REVEAL HIMSELF!
OUR PRISON RESOUNDS FROM THE FORCE OF YOUR BLOW, WARRIOR!
WE MEANT NO HARM--YET WE ARE ATTACKED WITHOUT REASON! I CANNOT ALLOW ANOTHER SUCH INTERRUPTION AT THE PRESENT TIME!


GAZE INTO THE EYE OF HORUS, WARRIOR! KNOW IN TIMES GONE BY THAT ITS POWER IS THAT OF DISTURBANCE!
IT HAS BEEN MANY CENTURIES SINCE THE EYE HAS BEEN EMPLOYED--
--BUT I THINK ITS POWER HAS NOT DIMINISHED!
THE EYE DOTH LOOM LARGE-- CATCHING FULL UPON IT THE RAYS OF THE SUN!
MY LIMBS DO TREMBLE-- THEY REFUSE TO OBEY THE COMMANDS OF MY WILL!
ALL IS CHAOS WITHIN MY MIND!
I LACK E'EN THE STRENGTH TO GRASP MJOLNIR--
--AND IF MY URU HAMMER BE DROPPED--THEN IN A MINUTE'S TIME I REVERT TO MY MORTAL GUISE AND ALL WILL BE LOST!
NAY! IT MUST NOT BE!
THOR IS THOR-- AND MAY NOT BE TOYED WITH IN SUCH A MANNER!
THOR IS GOD OF THUNDER!
KRAK!
AND HIS WILL IS HIS OWN!
YOUR STRENGTH IS AMAZING, WARRIOR! CLOUDS DO COVER THE EYE--
--AND IT RETURNS TO HORUS! YOU HAVE PACIFIED THE TEMPEST I SOUGHT TO IMPOSE UPON YOU!
BUT HORUS IS NOT YET DONE!
THE CEREMONY WITHIN MUST NOT BE HALTED!
TASTE NOW THE POWER OF THE FALCON-PRINCE! DRINK OF THE LIGHT OF HEAVEN!
ZIST!
'TIS MY ENCHANTED MALLET THAT WILL DRINK OF THY WEAPON'S RAYS!


EVER HAS HORUS BEEN CALLED 'THE UNIQUE ONE' AMONG THE ASSEMBLED HOSTS OF SACRED HELIOPOLIS!
YET YOU CALL YOURSELF A PRINCE AND YOUR POWER DOES RIVAL MY OWN!
THOU DOST FACE THOR--PRINCE OF ASGARD!
HE WHO IS CALLED POWER INCARNATE--!
--RIGHT CHAMPION OF THE AESIR O'ER WHICH ODIN DOTH RULE IN GLORY!
SKRAKT!
AND 'TIS ODIN THOU HAST IMPRISONED WITHIN THY TOMB!
WHATE'ER YOUR PURPOSE! WHATE'ER YOUR PLAN!
SUCH AN ACT OF INFAMY SHALL NOT GO UNRIGHTED!
THY WEAPON IS DESTROYED, PRINCE OF EGYPT! WILT THOU NOW GIVE WAY BEFORE THE MIGHT OF THOR?
I FEAR WE MUST BATTLE, FELLOW PRINCE, THOUGH MY HEART IS NOT IN THE STRUGGLE!
I MAY NOT LET YOU ENTER-- EVEN IF YOUR QUEST BE A JUST ONE! THERE IS TOO MUCH AT STAKE!
THOU ART A NOBLE FOE, FALCON-LORD! 'TIS NOT MY WISH TO SEE THEE THROWN DOWN--
--YET 'TIS MY WISH TO SEE MY FATHER FREED FROM WITHIN THAT WHICH THOU DOST CALL THY PRISON!
HOLD, INTRUDER! STAY THY HAND!
I DO KNOW THAT VOICE!
OSIRIS! ISIS! THEN THE CEREMONY IS OVER!
YES, PRINCE! IT IS OVER!


WHAT MADNESS BE THIS!
DOST THOU NOT KNOW ME, FATHER? NO! I CAN SEE THAT THOU DOST NOT!
YET NOT E'EN IN THY PRESENT STATE OF FORGETFULNESS DID I THINK THAT THOU COULDST LOOK UPON THY SON WITH SUCH WITHERING ANGER!
HE IS NO LONGER YOUR FATHER, PRINCE OF ASGARD! THE CEREMONY IS DONE!
HE WHO WAS CALLED ODIN HAS RETURNED TO HIS CHILDREN OF A PREVIOUS INCARNATION!
HE IS NOW THE 'VERY OLD ONE' THAT SIRED THE GODS OF EGYPT IN THE DIM FASTNESS OF TIME!
I BE ATUM-RE-- FATHER OF THE GODS! FATHER OVER ALL!
THE SUN RISES FROM MY BROW AND SETS BENEATH MY FEET! I COME TO DO BATTLE AT THE CALL OF MY CHILDREN--
--WHOM THOU DOST THREATEN, INTRUDER! AND FOR THAT THOU MUST DIE!
FLESH MUST THEN MAKE WAR UPON FLESH!
BUT IF ODIN KILLS THOR-- OR THOR, ODIN-- CAN ONE THEN LIVE WITHOUT THE OTHER?

FOR THE ANSWER TO THAT, PILGRIMS, TUNE IN NEXT MONTH WHEN--

THE DEATH-SHIP SAILS THE STARS!

THOR
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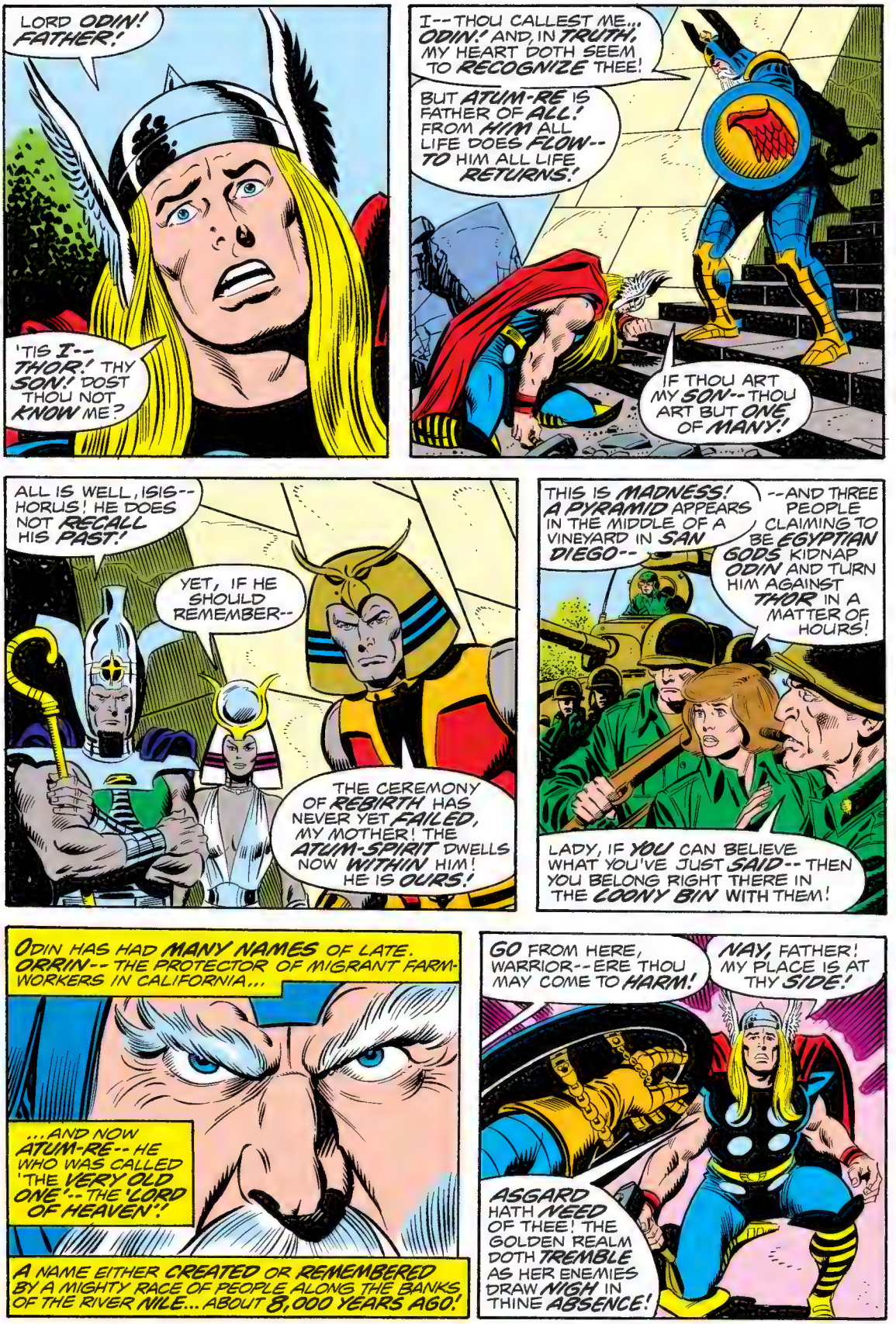
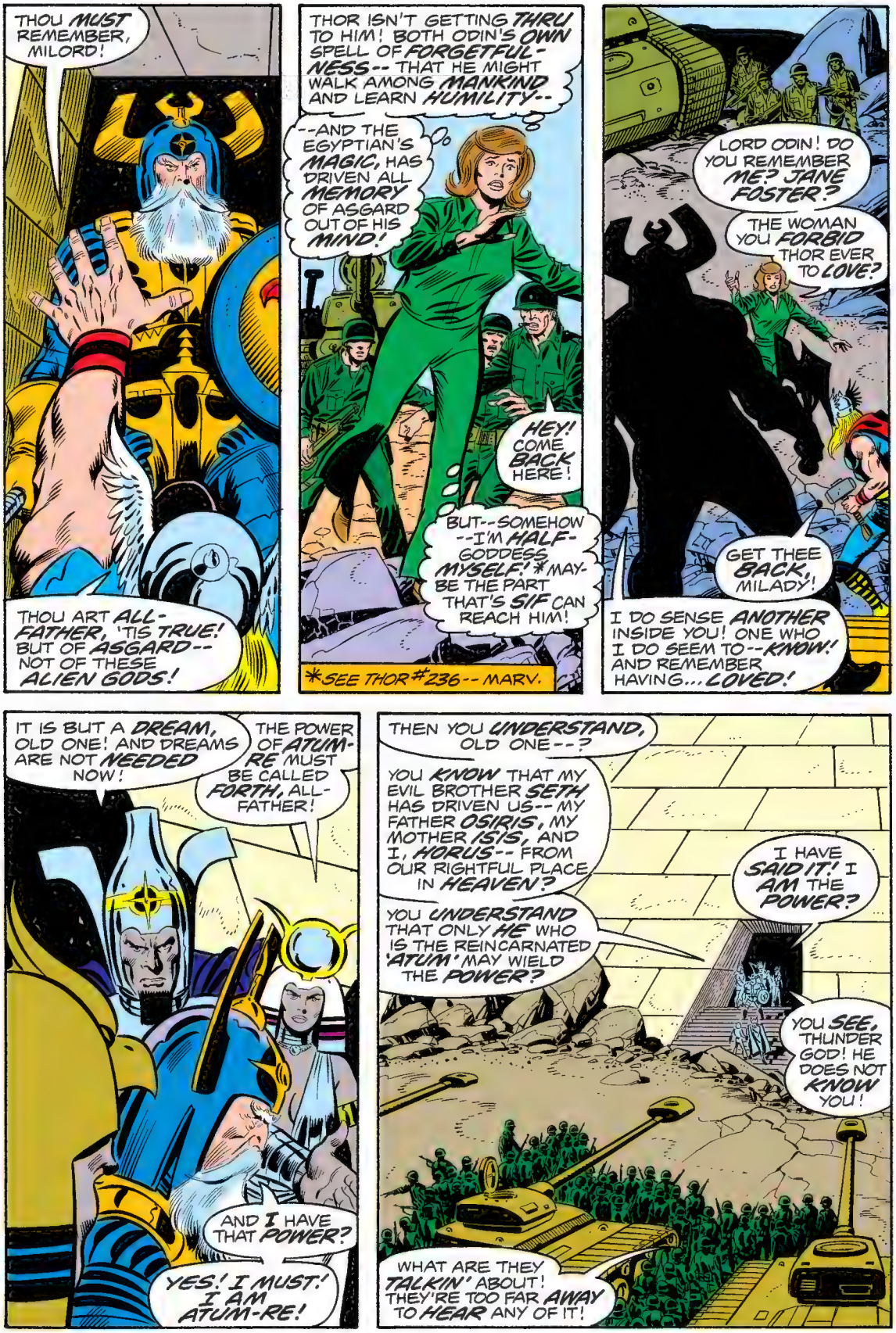
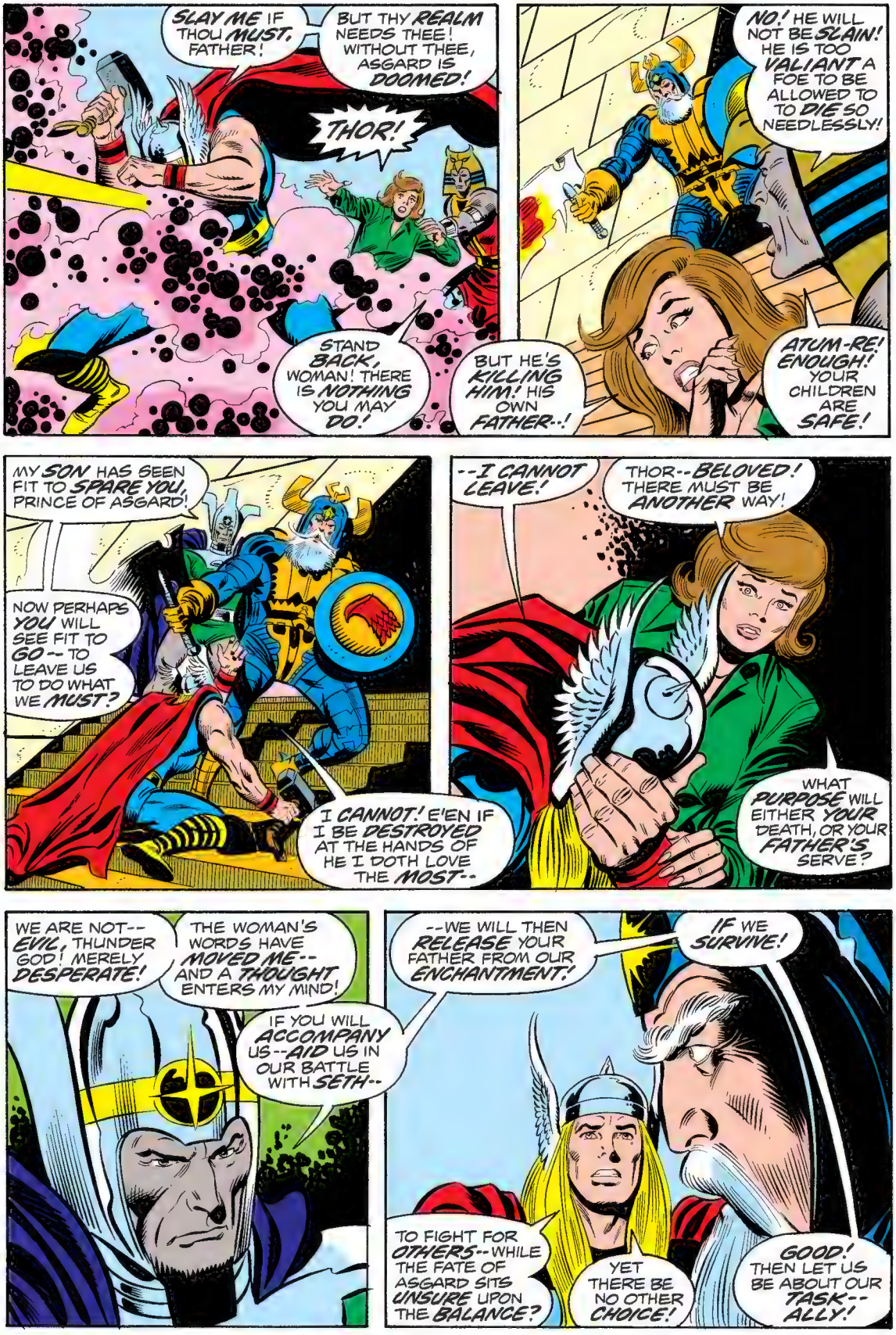
THE MIGHTY
THOR®
TELL THE DEATH-GOD THAT SENT THEE--
--THE GOD OF THUNDER SHALL TRIUMPH OVER ALL!
WHEN DEATH SAILS THE STARS!

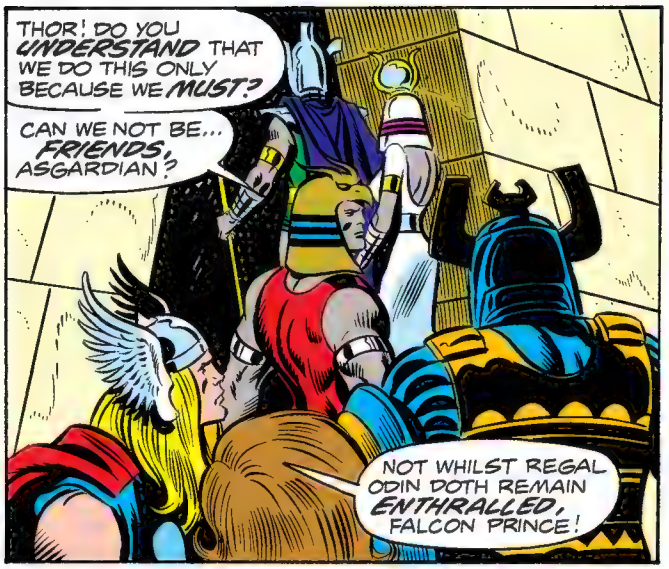
Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE MIGHTY THOR! TM
THE DEATH-SHIP SAILS THE STARS!
KNEEL, CUR! KNEEL BEFORE ATUM-RE, FATHER OF THE GODS OF EGYPT!
KNEEL AND FACE THY DEATH!
I KNEEL, FATHER-- FOR IF FLESH MUST BATTLE FLESH--
THOR WOULD RATHER DIE THAN STRIKE AT HE WHO SIRED HIM!
A TALE SO WONDROUS THAT ONLY MIGHTY MARVEL COULDST HAVE WROUGHT IT!
BILL MANTLO / AUTHOR
JOHN BUSCEMA, JOE SINNOTT / ARTISTS
JOHN COSTANZA, / letterer
PHIL RACHE, / colorist
MARV WOLFMAN / EDITOR

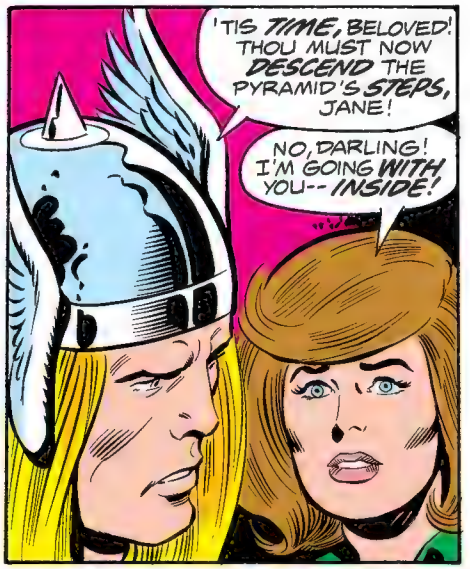

LORD ODIN! FATHER!
'TIS I-- THOR! THY SON! DOST THOU NOT KNOW ME?
I--THOU CALLEST ME... ODIN! AND, IN TRUTH, MY HEART DOTH SEEM TO RECOGNIZE THEE!
BUT ATUM-RE IS FATHER OF ALL! FROM HIM ALL LIFE DOES FLOW-- TO HIM ALL LIFE RETURNS!
IF THOU ART MY SON--THOU ART BUT ONE OF MANY!
ALL IS WELL, ISIS-- HORUS! HE DOES NOT RECALL HIS PAST!
YET, IF HE SHOULD REMEMBER--
THE CEREMONY OF REBIRTH HAS NEVER YET FAILED, MY MOTHER! THE ATUM-SPIRIT DWELLS NOW WITHIN HIM! HE IS OURS!
THIS IS MADNESS! A PYRAMID APPEARS IN THE MIDDLE OF A VINEYARD IN SAN DIEGO--
--AND THREE PEOPLE CLAIMING TO BE EGYPTIAN GODS KIDNAP ODIN AND TURN HIM AGAINST THOR IN A MATTER OF HOURS!
LADY, IF YOU CAN BELIEVE WHAT YOU'VE JUST SAID-- THEN YOU BELONG RIGHT THERE IN THE LOONY BIN WITH THEM!
ODIN HAS HAD MANY NAMES OF LATE. ORRIN-- THE PROTECTOR OF MIGRANT FARM-WORKERS IN CALIFORNIA...
...AND NOW ATUM-RE-- HE WHO WAS CALLED 'THE VERY OLD ONE'-- THE 'LORD OF HEAVEN'!
A NAME EITHER CREATED OR REMEMBERED BY A MIGHTY RACE OF PEOPLE ALONG THE BANKS OF THE RIVER NILE... ABOUT 8,000 YEARS AGO!
GO FROM HERE, WARRIOR-- ERE THOU MAY COME TO HARM!
NAY, FATHER! MY PLACE IS AT THY SIDE!
ASGARD HATH NEED OF THEE! THE GOLDEN REALM DOTH TREMBLE AS HER ENEMIES DRAW NIGH IN THINE ABSENCE!

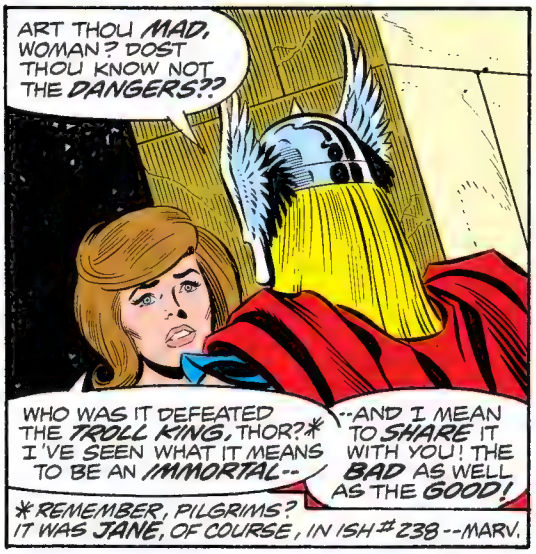

THOU MUST REMEMBER, MILORD!
THOU ART ALL-FATHER, 'TIS TRUE! BUT OF ASGARD-- NOT OF THESE ALIEN GODS!
THOR ISN'T GETTING THRU TO HIM! BOTH ODIN'S OWN SPELL OF FORGETFULNESS-- THAT HE MIGHT WALK AMONG MANKIND AND LEARN HUMILITY--
--AND THE EGYPTIAN'S MAGIC, HAS DRIVEN ALL MEMORY OF ASGARD OUT OF HIS MIND!
HEY! COME BACK HERE!
BUT--SOMEHOW --I'M HALF-GODDESS MYSELF! *MAYBE THE PART THAT'S SIF CAN REACH HIM!
*SEE THOR #236-- MARV.
LORD ODIN! DO YOU REMEMBER ME? JANE FOSTER?
THE WOMAN YOU FORBID THOR EVER TO LOVE?
GET THEE BACK, MILADY!
I DO SENSE ANOTHER INSIDE YOU! ONE WHO I DO SEEM TO--KNOW! AND REMEMBER HAVING... LOVED!
IT IS BUT A DREAM, OLD ONE! AND DREAMS ARE NOT NEEDED NOW!
THE POWER OF ATUM-RE MUST BE CALLED FORTH, ALL-FATHER!
AND I HAVE THAT POWER?
YES! I MUST! I AM ATUM-RE!
THEN YOU UNDERSTAND, OLD ONE--?
YOU KNOW THAT MY EVIL BROTHER SETH HAS DRIVEN US-- MY FATHER OSIRIS, MY MOTHER ISIS, AND I, HORUS-- FROM OUR RIGHTFUL PLACE IN HEAVEN?
YOU UNDERSTAND THAT ONLY HE WHO IS THE REINCARNATED 'ATUM' MAY WIELD THE POWER?
I HAVE SAID IT! I AM THE POWER?
YOU SEE, THUNDER GOD! HE DOES NOT KNOW YOU!
WHAT ARE THEY TALKIN' ABOUT! THEY'RE TOO FAR AWAY TO HEAR ANY OF IT!

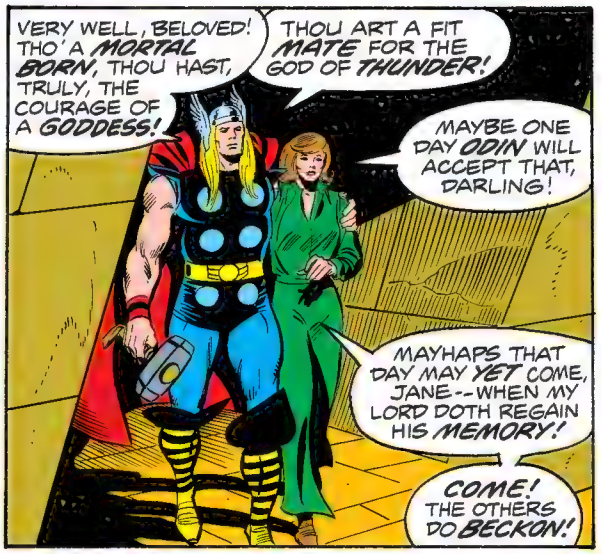
I DID FIGHT THY SON, OSIRIS! I WILL FIGHT THEE AS WELL!
WE BEAR YOU NO MALICE, ASGARDIAN!
BUT YOU MUST BE MADE TO SEE!
WE ARE ENDANGERED! MY BROTHER, SETH, NOW HAS THE POWER TO END OUR EXISTENCE IN HEAVEN!
ONLY YOUR FATHER CAN SAVE US!
ONLY HE MAY WIELD THE ATUM-FORCE!
WHAT THEN OF ASGARD, EGYPTIAN?
IS SHE TO FALL WHILST THOU HOLDS MY LORD ENTRANCED?
NEVER! IT SHALL NOT BE!
IT MUST BE, PRINCE!
ATUM-RE! YOUR CHILDREN NEED YOU!
I HEAR MY CHILDREN!
LET THERE BE NO MORE TALK! DELAY MAY WELL BE THE DEATH OF US!
AWAY, WARRIOR!
BACK FROM THE STEPS OF HEAVEN!
ZZAATT!
ATUM-RE COMMANDS IT!
FATHER!!


SLAY ME IF THOU MUST, FATHER!
BUT THY REALM NEEDS THEE! WITHOUT THEE, ASGARD IS DOOMED!
THOR!
STAND BACK, WOMAN! THERE IS NOTHING YOU MAY DO!
BUT HE'S KILLING HIM! HIS OWN FATHER--!
NO! HE WILL NOT BE SLAIN! HE IS TOO VALIANT A FOE TO BE ALLOWED TO TO DIE SO NEEDLESSLY!
ATUM-RE! ENOUGH! YOUR CHILDREN ARE SAFE!
MY SON HAS SEEN FIT TO SPARE YOU, PRINCE OF ASGARD!
NOW PERHAPS YOU WILL SEE FIT TO GO -- TO LEAVE US TO DO WHAT WE MUST?
I CANNOT! E'EN IF I BE DESTROYED AT THE HANDS OF HE I DOTH LOVE THE MOST--
--I CANNOT LEAVE!
THOR--BELOVED! THERE MUST BE ANOTHER WAY!
WHAT PURPOSE WILL EITHER YOUR DEATH, OR YOUR FATHER'S SERVE?
WE ARE NOT-- EVIL, THUNDER GOD! MERELY DESPERATE!
THE WOMAN'S WORDS HAVE MOVED ME-- AND A THOUGHT ENTERS MY MIND!
IF YOU WILL ACCOMPANY US--AID US IN OUR BATTLE WITH SETH--
--WE WILL THEN RELEASE YOUR FATHER FROM OUR ENCHANTMENT!
IF WE SURVIVE!
TO FIGHT FOR OTHERS--WHILE THE FATE OF ASGARD SITS UNSURE UPON THE BALANCE?
YET THERE BE NO OTHER CHOICE!
GOOD! THEN LET US BE ABOUT OUR TASK-- ALLY!

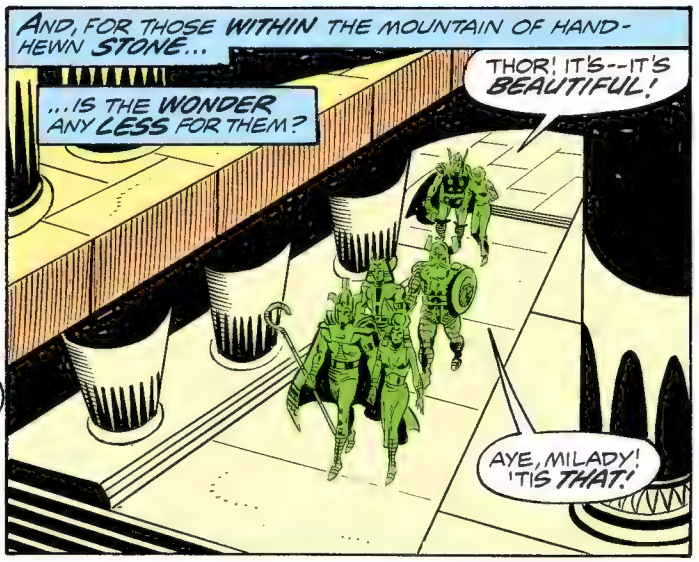

THOR! DO YOU UNDERSTAND THAT WE DO THIS ONLY BECAUSE WE MUST?
CAN WE NOT BE... FRIENDS, ASGARDIAN?
NOT WHILST REGAL ODIN DOTH REMAIN ENTHRALLED, FALCON PRINCE!

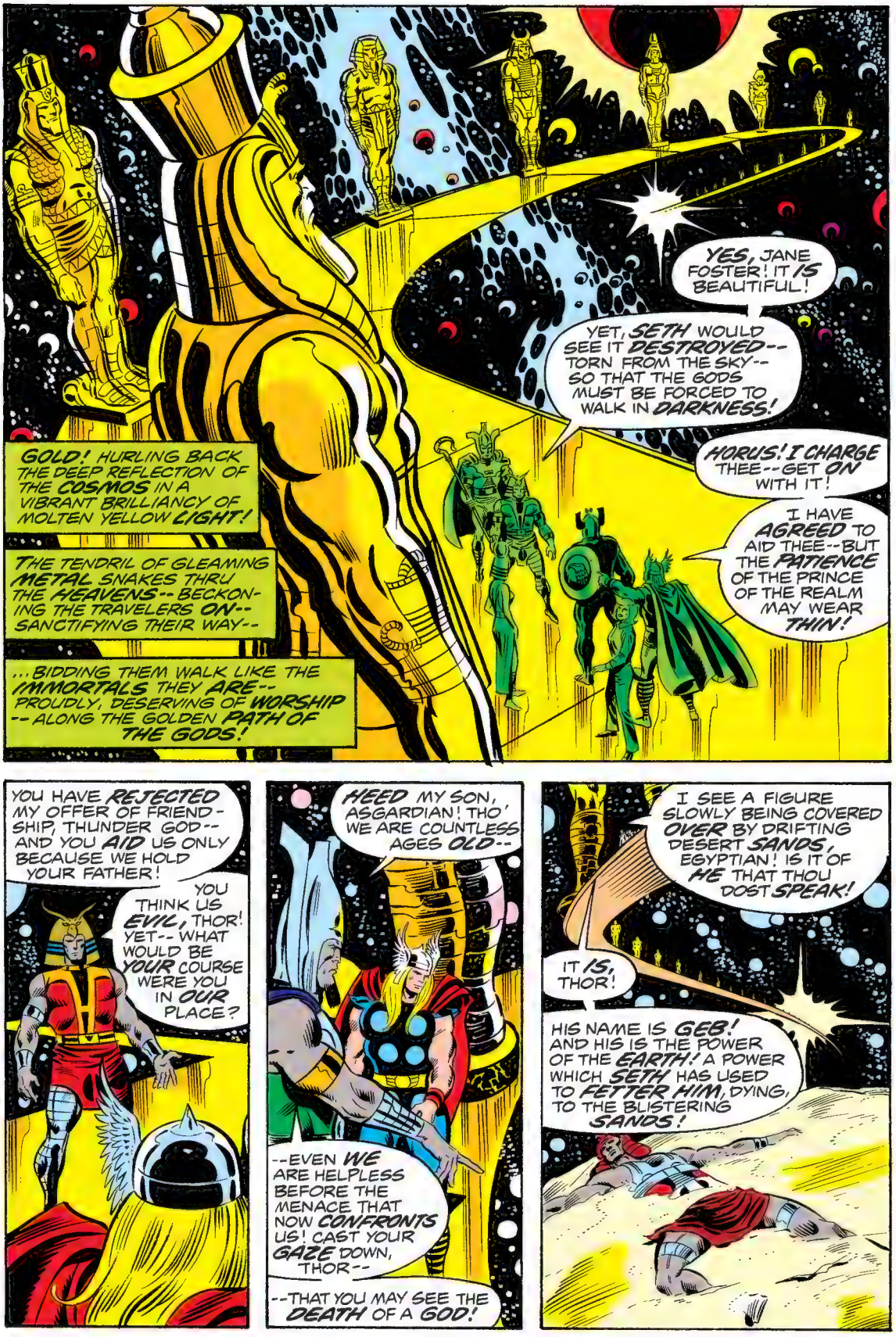

'TIS TIME, BELOVED! THOU MUST NOW DESCEND THE PYRAMID'S STEPS, JANE!
NO, DARLING! I'M GOING WITH YOU-- INSIDE!

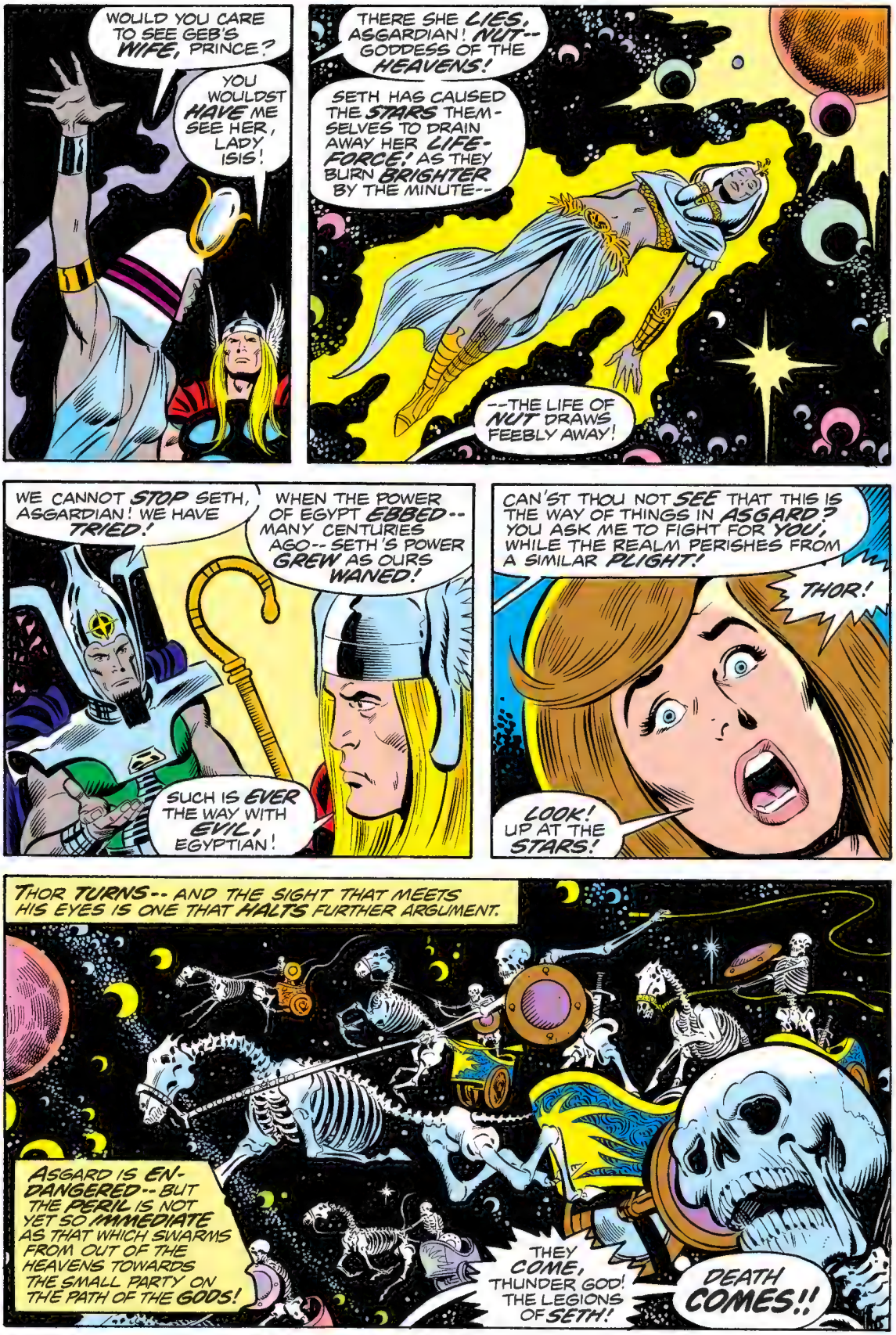

ART THOU MAD, WOMAN? DOST THOU KNOW NOT THE DANGERS??
WHO WAS IT DEFEATED THE TROLL KING, THOR?* I'VE SEEN WHAT IT MEANS TO BE AN IMMORTAL--
--AND I MEAN TO SHARE IT WITH YOU! THE BAD AS WELL AS THE GOOD!
*REMEMBER, PILGRIMS? IT WAS JANE, OF COURSE, IN ISH #238 --MARV.

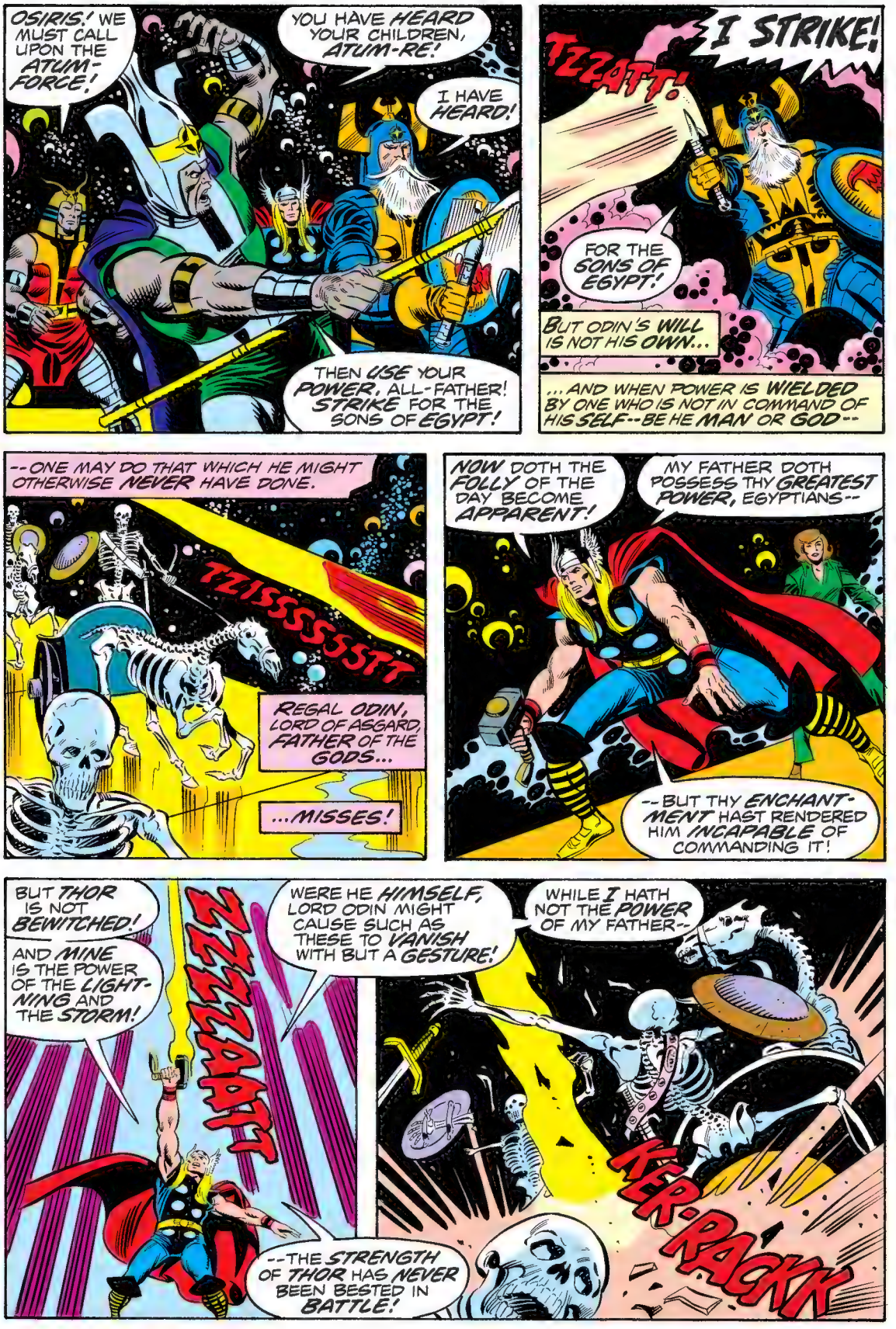

VERY WELL, BELOVED! THO' A MORTAL BORN, THOU HAST, TRULY, THE COURAGE OF A GODDESS!
THOU ART A FIT MATE FOR THE GOD OF THUNDER!
MAYBE ONE DAY ODIN WILL ACCEPT THAT, DARLING!
MAYHAPS THAT DAY MAY YET COME, JANE--WHEN MY LORD DOTH REGAIN HIS MEMORY!
COME! THE OTHERS DO BECKON!

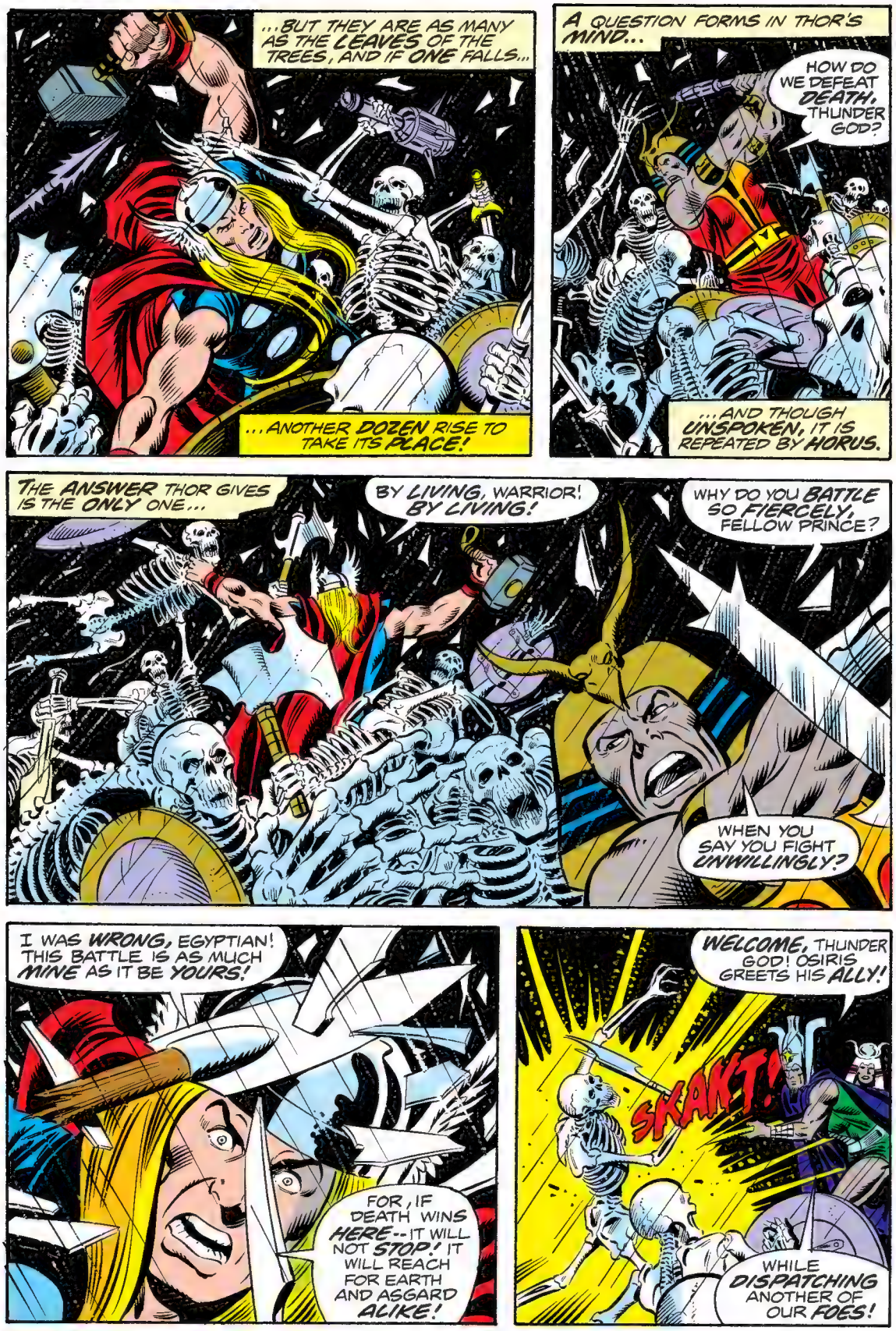
AS ALWAYS, THE PAGEANTRY OF THE GODS IS WITNESSED BY DUMB-STRUCK MORTALS...
...WHO MAY ONLY GUESS AT THE PURPOSE OF THE EVENTS THAT TRANSPIRE BEFORE THEIR EYES.
THEY'RE GOIN' INSIDE, COLONEL! WHAT DO WE DO NOW?
WHAT WOULD YOU SUGGEST, PRIVATE?
TICKET THEM FOR ILLEGALLY PARKING A PYRAMID?

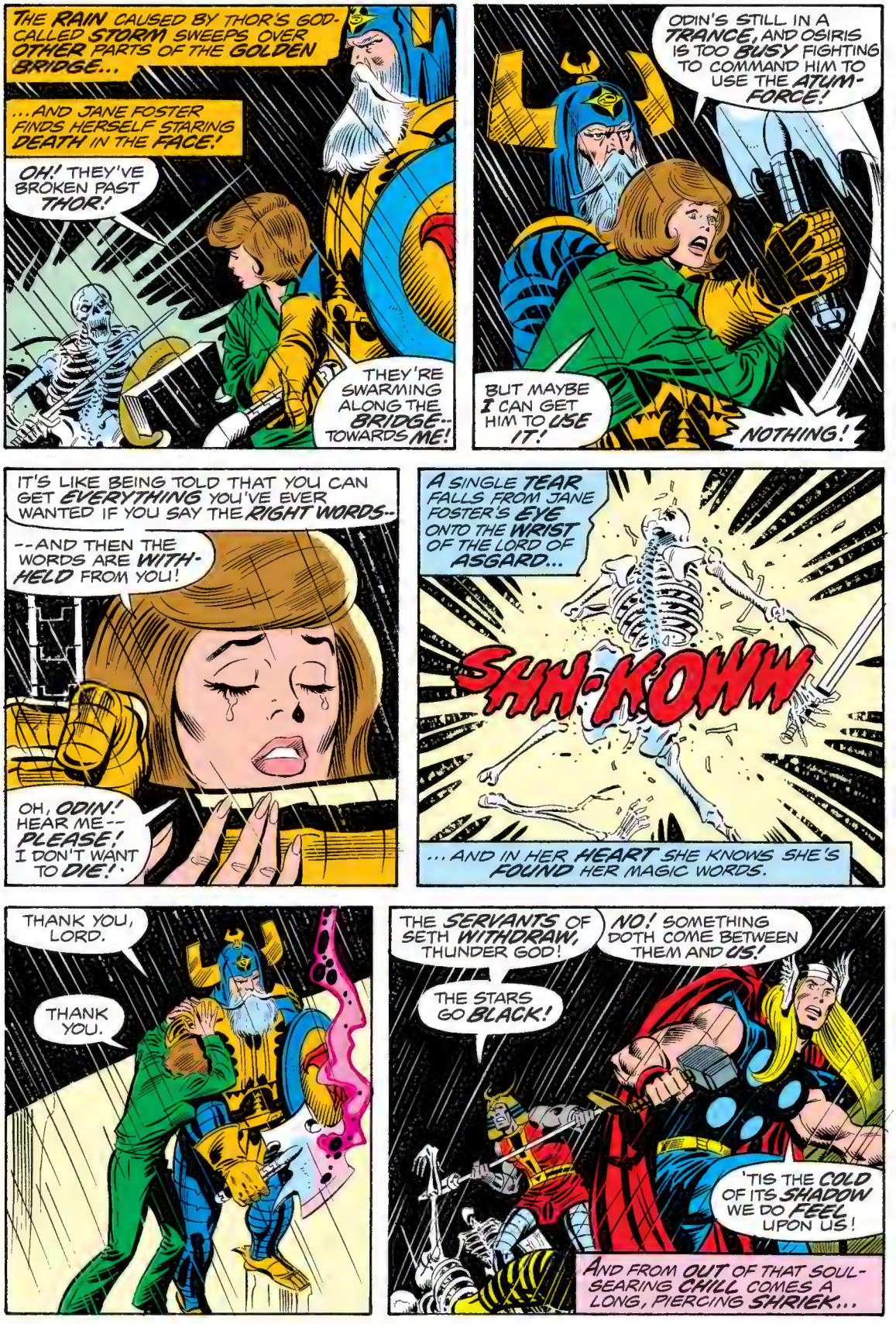

AND, FOR THOSE WITHIN THE MOUNTAIN OF HAND-HEWN STONE...
...IS THE WONDER ANY LESS FOR THEM?
THOR! IT'S--IT'S BEAUTIFUL!
AYE, MILADY! 'TIS THAT!


GOLD! HURLING BACK THE DEEP REFLECTION OF THE COSMOS IN A VIBRANT BRILLIANCY OF MOLTEN YELLOW LIGHT!
THE TENDRIL OF GLEAMING METAL SNAKES THRU THE HEAVENS--BECKONING THE TRAVELERS ON--SANCTIFYING THEIR WAY--
...BIDDING THEM WALK LIKE THE IMMORTALS THEY ARE--PROUDLY, DESERVING OF WORSHIP--ALONG THE GOLDEN PATH OF THE GODS!
YES, JANE FOSTER! IT IS BEAUTIFUL!
YET, SETH WOULD SEE IT DESTROYED--TORN FROM THE SKY--SO THAT THE GODS MUST BE FORCED TO WALK IN DARKNESS!
HORUS! I CHARGE THEE--GET ON WITH IT!
I HAVE AGREED TO AID THEE--BUT THE PATIENCE OF THE PRINCE OF THE REALM MAY WEAR THIN!
YOU HAVE REJECTED MY OFFER OF FRIENDSHIP, THUNDER GOD--AND YOU AID US ONLY BECAUSE WE HOLD YOUR FATHER!
YOU THINK US EVIL, THOR! YET--WHAT WOULD BE YOUR COURSE WERE YOU IN OUR PLACE?
HEED MY SON, ASGARDIAN! THO' WE ARE COUNTLESS AGES OLD--
--EVEN WE ARE HELPLESS BEFORE THE MENACE THAT NOW CONFRONTS US! CAST YOUR GAZE DOWN, THOR--
--THAT YOU MAY SEE THE DEATH OF A GOD!
I SEE A FIGURE SLOWLY BEING COVERED OVER BY DRIFTING DESERT SANDS, EGYPTIAN! IS IT OF HE THAT THOU DOST SPEAK!
IT IS, THOR!
HIS NAME IS GEB! AND HIS IS THE POWER OF THE EARTH! A POWER WHICH SETH HAS USED TO FETTER HIM, DYING, TO THE BLISTERING SANDS!

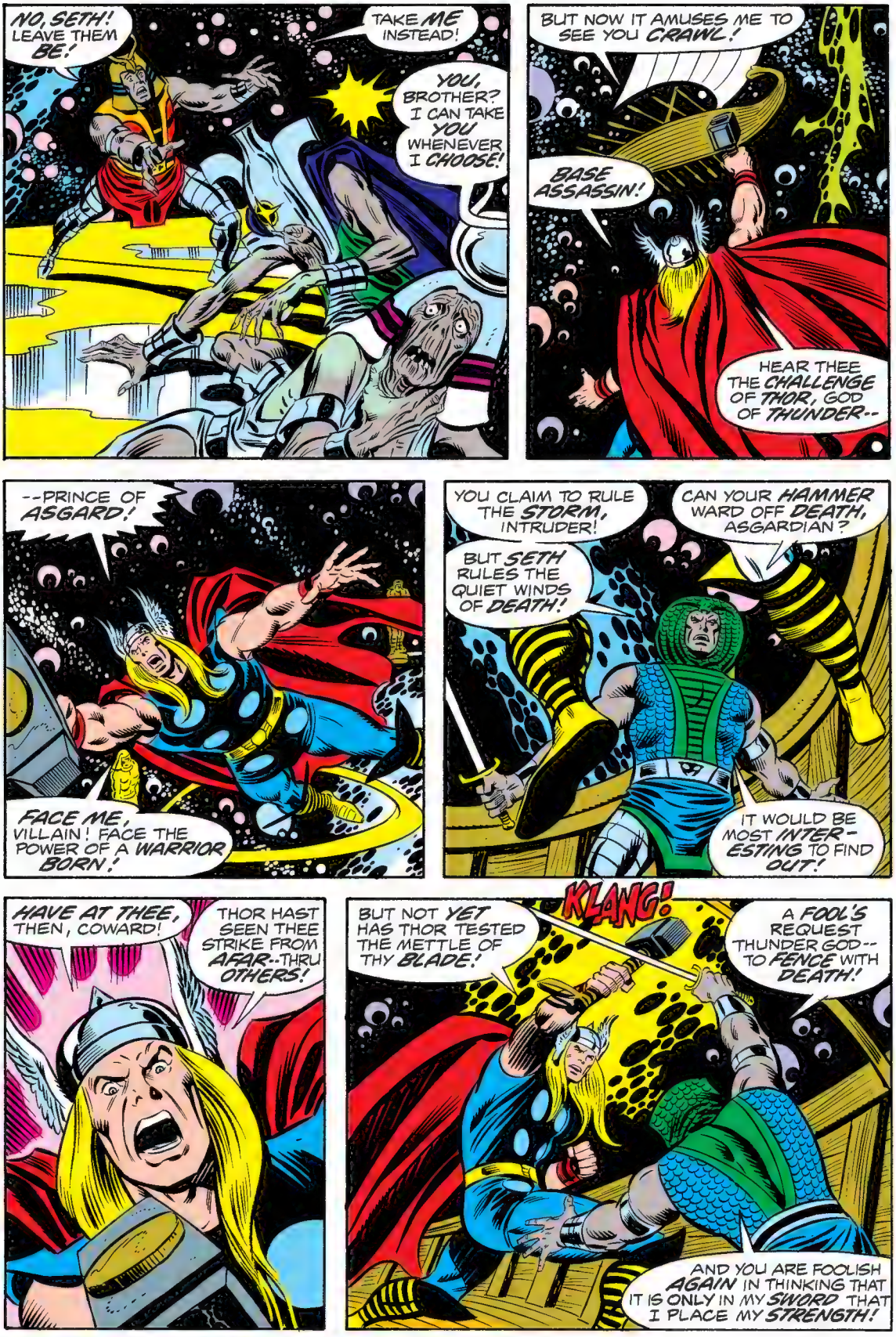

WOULD YOU CARE TO SEE GEB'S WIFE, PRINCE?
YOU WOULDST HAVE ME SEE HER, LADY ISIS!
THERE SHE LIES, ASGARDIAN! NUT-- GODDESS OF THE HEAVENS!
SETH HAS CAUSED THE STARS THEMSELVES TO DRAIN AWAY HER LIFE-FORCE! AS THEY BURN BRIGHTER BY THE MINUTE--
--THE LIFE OF NUT DRAWS FEEBLY AWAY!
WE CANNOT STOP SETH, ASGARDIAN! WE HAVE TRIED!
WHEN THE POWER OF EGYPT EBBED-- MANY CENTURIES AGO-- SETH'S POWER GREW AS OURS WANED!
SUCH IS EVER THE WAY WITH EVIL, EGYPTIAN!
CAN'ST THOU NOT SEE THAT THIS IS THE WAY OF THINGS IN ASGARD? YOU ASK ME TO FIGHT FOR YOU, WHILE THE REALM PERISHES FROM A SIMILAR PLIGHT!
THOR!
LOOK! UP AT THE STARS!
THOR TURNS-- AND THE SIGHT THAT MEETS HIS EYES IS ONE THAT HALTS FURTHER ARGUMENT.
ASGARD IS ENDANGERED-- BUT THE PERIL IS NOT YET SO IMMEDIATE AS THAT WHICH SWARMS FROM OUT OF THE HEAVENS TOWARDS THE SMALL PARTY ON THE PATH OF THE GODS!
THEY COME, THUNDER GOD! THE LEGIONS OF SETH!
DEATH COMES!!

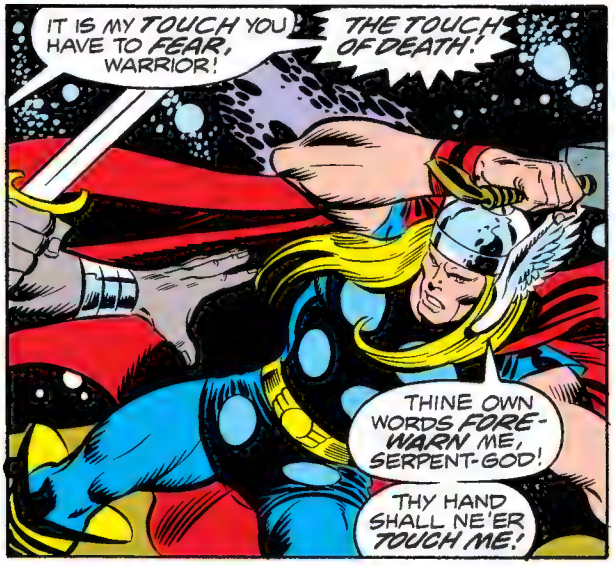

OSIRIS! WE MUST CALL UPON THE ATUM-FORCE!
YOU HAVE HEARD YOUR CHILDREN, ATUM-RE!
I HAVE HEARD!
THEN USE YOUR POWER, ALL-FATHER! STRIKE FOR THE SONS OF EGYPT!
I STRIKE!
TZZATT!
FOR THE SONS OF EGYPT!
BUT ODIN'S WILL IS NOT HIS OWN...
...AND WHEN POWER IS WIELDED BY ONE WHO IS NOT IN COMMAND OF HIS SELF--BE HE MAN OR GOD--
--ONE MAY DO THAT WHICH HE MIGHT OTHERWISE NEVER HAVE DONE.
TZISSSSSSTT
REGAL ODIN, LORD OF ASGARD, FATHER OF THE GODS...
...MISSES!
NOW DOTH THE FOLLY OF THE DAY BECOME APPARENT!
MY FATHER DOTH POSSESS THY GREATEST POWER, EGYPTIANS--
--BUT THY ENCHANT-MENT HAST RENDERED HIM INCAPABLE OF COMMANDING IT!
BUT THOR IS NOT BEWITCHED!
AND MINE IS THE POWER OF THE LIGHT-NING AND THE STORM!
ZZZZAAAT!
WERE HE HIMSELF, LORD ODIN MIGHT CAUSE SUCH AS THESE TO VANISH WITH BUT A GESTURE!
WHILE I HATH NOT THE POWER OF MY FATHER--
KER-RACKK
--THE STRENGTH OF THOR HAS NEVER BEEN BESTED IN BATTLE!


...BUT THEY ARE AS MANY AS THE LEAVES OF THE TREES, AND IF ONE FALLS...
...ANOTHER DOZEN RISE TO TAKE ITS PLACE!
A QUESTION FORMS IN THOR'S MIND...
HOW DO WE DEFEAT DEATH, THUNDER GOD?
...AND THOUGH UNSPOKEN, IT IS REPEATED BY HORUS.
THE ANSWER THOR GIVES IS THE ONLY ONE...
BY LIVING, WARRIOR! BY LIVING!
WHY DO YOU BATTLE SO FIERCELY, FELLOW PRINCE?
WHEN YOU SAY YOU FIGHT UNWILLINGLY?
I WAS WRONG, EGYPTIAN! THIS BATTLE IS AS MUCH MINE AS IT BE YOURS!
FOR, IF DEATH WINS HERE--IT WILL NOT STOP! IT WILL REACH FOR EARTH AND ASGARD ALIKE!
WELCOME, THUNDER GOD! OSIRIS GREETS HIS ALLY!
SKANK!
WHILE DISPATCHING ANOTHER OF OUR FOES!


THE RAIN CAUSED BY THOR'S GOD-CALLED STORM SWEEPS OVER OTHER PARTS OF THE GOLDEN BRIDGE...
...AND JANE FOSTER FINDS HERSELF STARING DEATH IN THE FACE!
OH! THEY'VE BROKEN PAST THOR!
THEY'RE SWARMING ALONG THE BRIDGE-- TOWARDS ME!
ODIN'S STILL IN A TRANCE, AND OSIRIS IS TOO BUSY FIGHTING TO COMMAND HIM TO USE THE ATUM-FORCE!
BUT MAYBE I CAN GET HIM TO USE IT!
NOTHING!
IT'S LIKE BEING TOLD THAT YOU CAN GET EVERYTHING YOU'VE EVER WANTED IF YOU SAY THE RIGHT WORDS--
--AND THEN THE WORDS ARE WITH-HELD FROM YOU!
OH, ODIN! HEAR ME-- PLEASE! I DON'T WANT TO DIE!
A SINGLE TEAR FALLS FROM JANE FOSTER'S EYE ONTO THE WRIST OF THE LORD OF ASGARD...
SHH-KOWW
...AND IN HER HEART SHE KNOWS SHE'S FOUND HER MAGIC WORDS.
THANK YOU, LORD.
THANK YOU.
THE SERVANTS OF SETH WITHDRAW, THUNDER GOD!
NO! SOMETHING DOTH COME BETWEEN THEM AND US!
THE STARS GO BLACK!
'TIS THE COLD OF ITS SHADOW WE DO FEEL UPON US!
AND FROM OUT OF THAT SOUL-SEARING CHILL COMES A LONG, PIERCING SHRIEK...

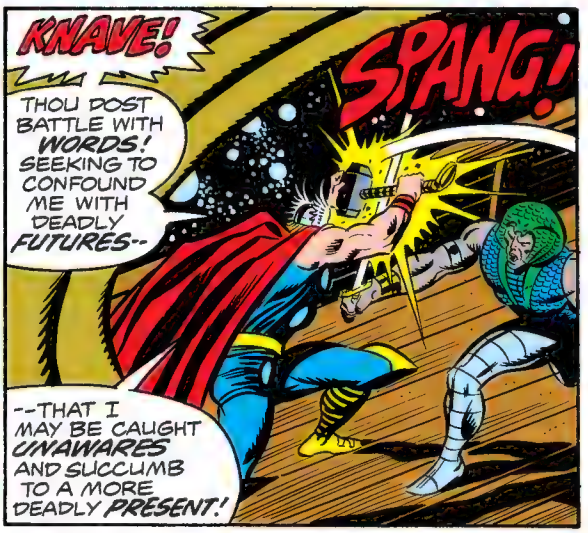
...AND THE DEATH-SHIP SAILS THE STARS!!
IT IS THE SHADOW OF DEATH YOU FEEL, INTRUDER!
AND IT IS DEATH THAT COMES TO CLAIM YOU!
I SEE MY STINKING FATHER BELOW--
AND THE HARLOT-QUEEN, MY MOTHER!
BUT WHERE IS MY SCHEMING SIBLING? MY TOAD-BROTHER?
WHERE IS HORUS, THE HATED ONE?
HERE, SERPENT!
BELOW YOU!
HAVE A CARE, FALCON PRINCE! HE DOTH BAIT THEE!
AND THE FOOL HAS STRUCK AT THE BAIT!
BUT THE WAY TO MY BROTHER'S FEARS IS NOT THRU HIM--
SSHHHH
--BUT THRU OUR PARENTS!
WATCH, MY BROTHER! WATCH AS OUR FATHER AND MOTHER REVEAL THEIR TRUE SELVES!
WATCH AS THEY BECOME AS ANCIENT AS THE RACE THAT CREATED THEM!
WATCH AS THEY REVERT TO THE EGYPTIAN DUST FROM WHENCE THEY SPRUNG!


NO, SETH! LEAVE THEM BE!
TAKE ME INSTEAD!
YOU, BROTHER? I CAN TAKE YOU WHENEVER I CHOOSE!
BUT NOW IT AMUSES ME TO SEE YOU CRAWL!
BASE ASSASSIN!
HEAR THEE THE CHALLENGE OF THOR, GOD OF THUNDER--
--PRINCE OF ASGARD!
FACE ME, VILLAIN! FACE THE POWER OF A WARRIOR BORN!
YOU CLAIM TO RULE THE STORM, INTRUDER!
BUT SETH RULES THE QUIET WINDS OF DEATH!
CAN YOUR HAMMER WARD OFF DEATH, ASGARDIAN?
IT WOULD BE MOST INTER-ESTING TO FIND OUT!
HAVE AT THEE, THEN, COWARD!
THOR HAST SEEN THEE STRIKE FROM AFAR--THRU OTHERS!
BUT NOT YET HAS THOR TESTED THE METTLE OF THY BLADE!
KLANG!
A FOOL'S REQUEST THUNDER GOD-- TO FENCE WITH DEATH!
AND YOU ARE FOOLISH AGAIN IN THINKING THAT IT IS ONLY IN MY SWORD THAT I PLACE MY STRENGTH!

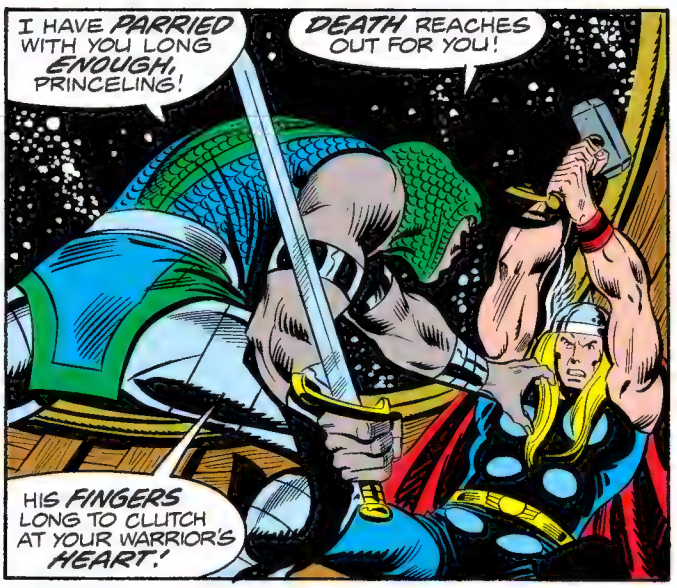

IT IS MY TOUCH YOU HAVE TO FEAR, WARRIOR!
THE TOUCH OF DEATH!
THINE OWN WORDS FORE-WARN ME, SERPENT-GOD!
THY HAND SHALL NE'ER TOUCH ME!

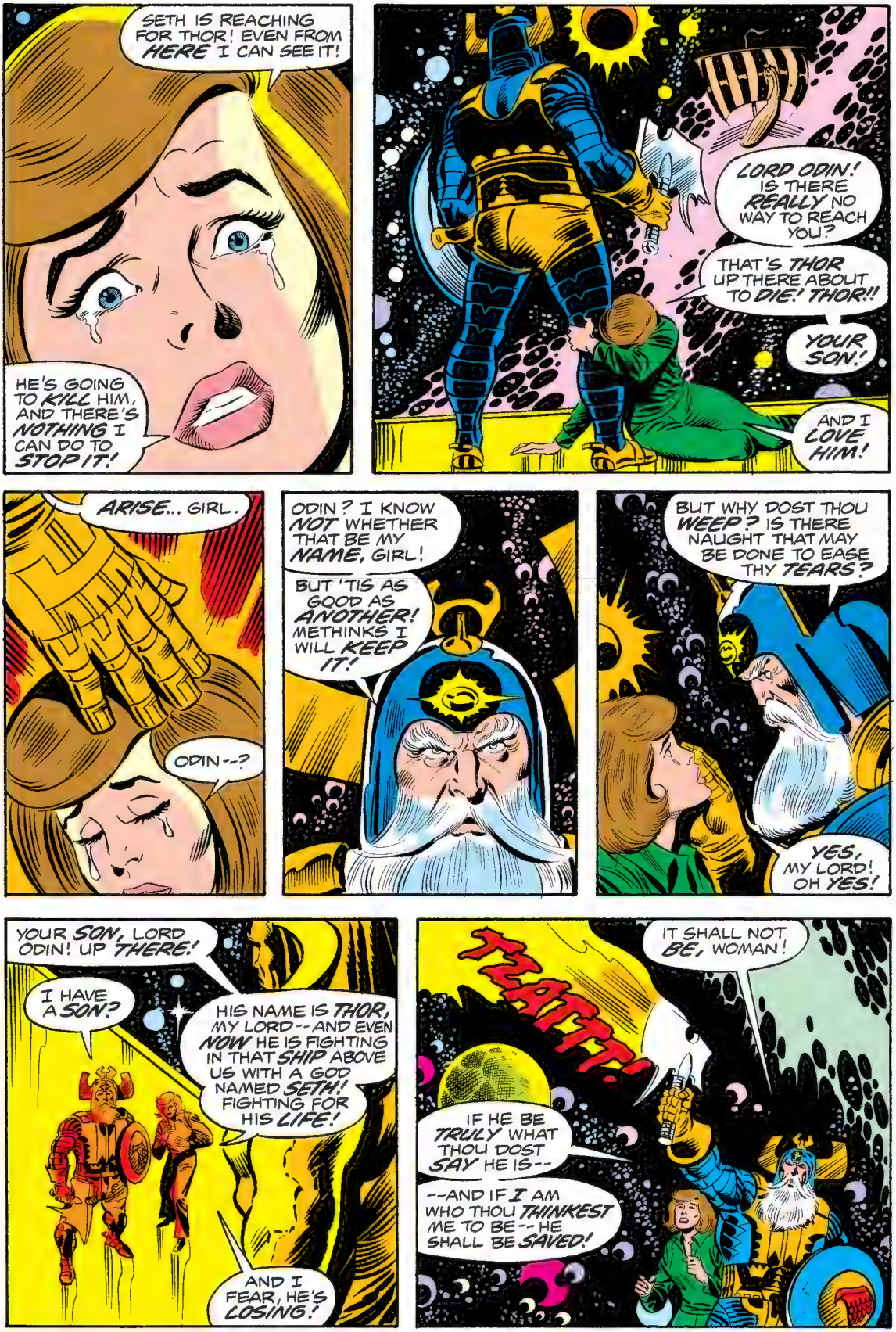
YET, HOW LONG CAN YOU AVOID IT, ASGARDIAN?
I HAVE WAITED CENTURIES FOR THIS DAY--AND CAN AFFORD TO BATTLE FOR MILLENIA TO COME!

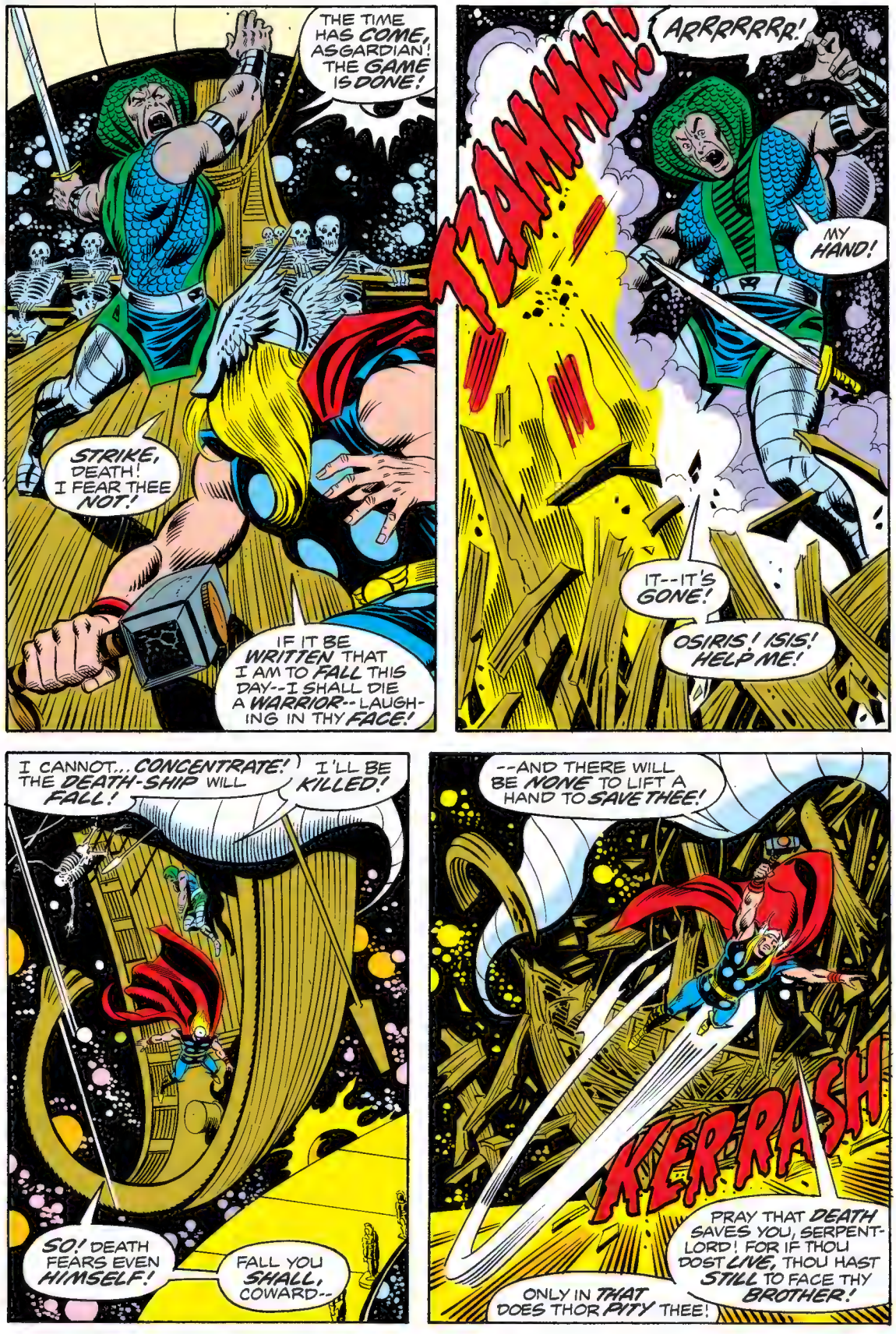
BUT WHAT OF YOU, THOR! CAN YOU CONTINUE TO BATTLE--
--KNOWING THAT IF YOU PROLONG IT OVERLONG, ASGARD WILL PERISH?

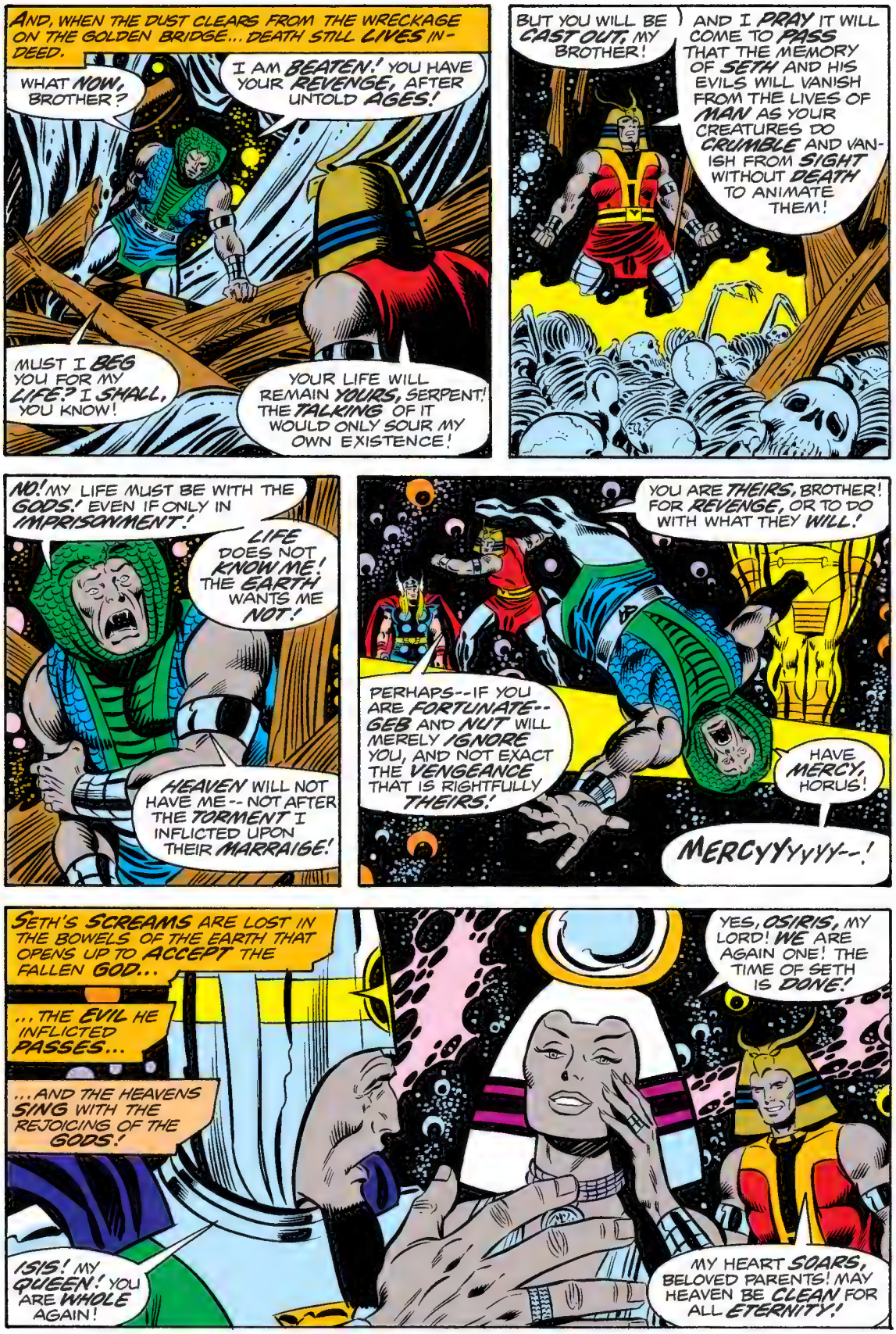

KNAVE!
SPANG!
THOU DOST BATTLE WITH WORDS! SEEKING TO CONFOUND ME WITH DEADLY FUTURES--
--THAT I MAY BE CAUGHT UNAWARES AND SUCCUMB TO A MORE DEADLY PRESENT!

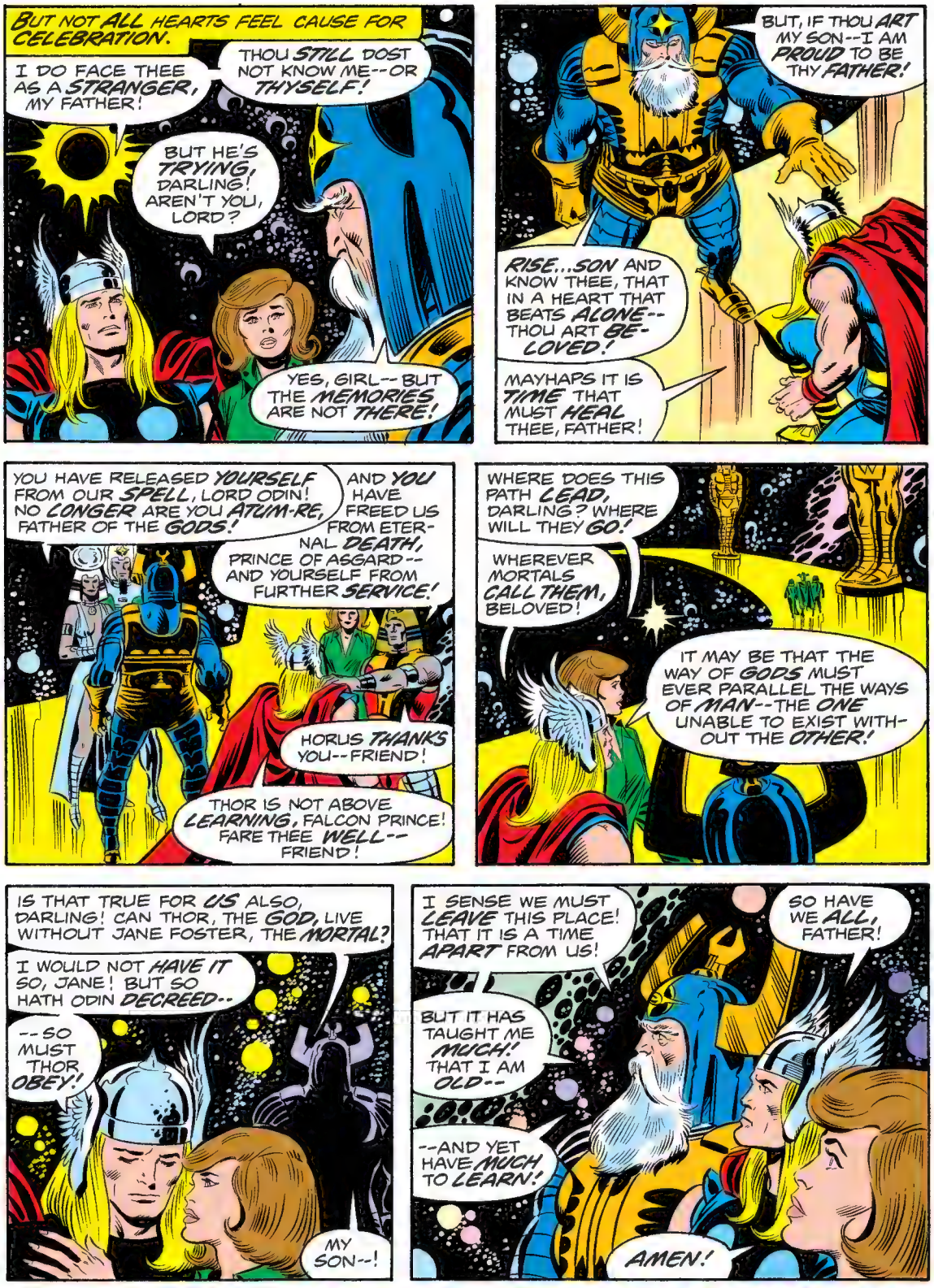
THOR DOTH SAY THEE NAY!
THO' THY ACCURSED HAND DOTH FORCE ME EVER BACK--
I WILL NOT YIELD TO THINE OTHER WEAPONS!
FEAR AND DESPAIR ARE ALIEN TERMS TO A SON OF ODIN!


I HAVE PARRIED WITH YOU LONG ENOUGH, PRINCELING!
DEATH REACHES OUT FOR YOU!
HIS FINGERS LONG TO CLUTCH AT YOUR WARRIOR'S HEART!


SETH IS REACHING FOR THOR! EVEN FROM HERE I CAN SEE IT!
HE'S GOING TO KILL HIM, AND THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO TO STOP IT!
LORD ODIN! IS THERE REALLY NO WAY TO REACH YOU?
THAT'S THOR UP THERE ABOUT TO DIE! THOR!!
YOUR SON!
AND I LOVE HIM!
ARISE... GIRL.
ODIN--?
ODIN? I KNOW NOT WHETHER THAT BE MY NAME, GIRL!
BUT 'TIS AS GOOD AS ANOTHER! METHINKS I WILL KEEP IT!
BUT WHY DOST THOU WEEP? IS THERE NAUGHT THAT MAY BE DONE TO EASE THY TEARS?
YES, MY LORD! OH YES!
YOUR SON, LORD ODIN! UP THERE!
I HAVE A SON?
HIS NAME IS THOR, MY LORD--AND EVEN NOW HE IS FIGHTING IN THAT SHIP ABOVE US WITH A GOD NAMED SETH! FIGHTING FOR HIS LIFE!
AND I FEAR, HE'S LOSING!
FLAT!
IT SHALL NOT BE, WOMAN!
IF HE BE TRULY WHAT THOU DOST SAY HE IS--
--AND IF I AM WHO THOU THINKEST ME TO BE--HE SHALL BE SAVED!


THE TIME HAS COME, ASGARDIAN! THE GAME IS DONE!
STRIKE, DEATH! I FEAR THEE NOT!
IF IT BE WRITTEN THAT I AM TO FALL THIS DAY--I SHALL DIE A WARRIOR--LAUGHING IN THY FACE!
TZAMMM!
ARRRRRRR!
MY HAND!
IT--IT'S GONE!
OSIRIS! ISIS! HELP ME!
I CANNOT... CONCENTRATE! THE DEATH-SHIP WILL FALL!
I'LL BE KILLED!
SO! DEATH FEARS EVEN HIMSELF!
FALL YOU SHALL, COWARD--
--AND THERE WILL BE NONE TO LIFT A HAND TO SAVE THEE!
KER-RASH
PRAY THAT DEATH SAVES YOU, SERPENT-LORD! FOR IF THOU DOST LIVE, THOU HAST STILL TO FACE THY BROTHER!
ONLY IN THAT DOES THOR PITY THEE!


AND, WHEN THE DUST CLEARS FROM THE WRECKAGE ON THE GOLDEN BRIDGE... DEATH STILL LIVES IN-DEED.
WHAT NOW, BROTHER?
I AM BEATEN! YOU HAVE YOUR REVENGE, AFTER UNTOLD AGES!
MUST I BEG YOU FOR MY LIFE? I SHALL, YOU KNOW!
YOUR LIFE WILL REMAIN YOURS, SERPENT! THE TALKING OF IT WOULD ONLY SOUR MY OWN EXISTENCE!
BUT YOU WILL BE CAST OUT, MY BROTHER!
AND I PRAY IT WILL COME TO PASS THAT THE MEMORY OF SETH AND HIS EVILS WILL VANISH FROM THE LIVES OF MAN AS YOUR CREATURES DO CRUMBLE AND VANISH FROM SIGHT WITHOUT DEATH TO ANIMATE THEM!
NO! MY LIFE MUST BE WITH THE GODS! EVEN IF ONLY IN IMPRISONMENT!
LIFE DOES NOT KNOW ME! THE EARTH WANTS ME NOT!
HEAVEN WILL NOT HAVE ME -- NOT AFTER THE TORMENT I INFLICTED UPON THEIR MARRAIGE!
YOU ARE THEIRS, BROTHER! FOR REVENGE, OR TO DO WITH WHAT THEY WILL!
PERHAPS--IF YOU ARE FORTUNATE-- GEB AND NUT WILL MERELY IGNORE YOU, AND NOT EXACT THE VENGEANCE THAT IS RIGHTFULLY THEIRS!
HAVE MERCY, HORUS!
MERCYYyyyy--!
SETH'S SCREAMS ARE LOST IN THE BOWELS OF THE EARTH THAT OPENS UP TO ACCEPT THE FALLEN GOD...
...THE EVIL HE INFLICTED PASSES...
...AND THE HEAVENS SING WITH THE REJOICING OF THE GODS!
YES, OSIRIS, MY LORD! WE ARE AGAIN ONE! THE TIME OF SETH IS DONE!
ISIS! MY QUEEN! YOU ARE WHOLE AGAIN!
MY HEART SOARS, BELOVED PARENTS! MAY HEAVEN BE CLEAN FOR ALL ETERNITY!


BUT NOT ALL HEARTS FEEL CAUSE FOR CELEBRATION.
I DO FACE THEE AS A STRANGER, MY FATHER!
THOU STILL DOST NOT KNOW ME--OR THYSELF!
BUT HE'S TRYING, DARLING! AREN'T YOU, LORD?
YES, GIRL--BUT THE MEMORIES ARE NOT THERE!
BUT, IF THOU ART MY SON--I AM PROUD TO BE THY FATHER!
RISE...SON AND KNOW THEE, THAT IN A HEART THAT BEATS ALONE--THOU ART BE-LOVED!
MAYHAPS IT IS TIME THAT MUST HEAL THEE, FATHER!
YOU HAVE RELEASED YOURSELF FROM OUR SPELL, LORD ODIN! NO LONGER ARE YOU ATUM-RE, FATHER OF THE GODS!
AND YOU HAVE FREED US FROM ETERNAL DEATH, PRINCE OF ASGARD--AND YOURSELF FROM FURTHER SERVICE!
HORUS THANKS YOU--FRIEND!
THOR IS NOT ABOVE LEARNING, FALCON PRINCE! FARE THEE WELL--FRIEND!
WHERE DOES THIS PATH LEAD, DARLING? WHERE WILL THEY GO!
WHEREVER MORTALS CALL THEM, BELOVED!
IT MAY BE THAT THE WAY OF GODS MUST EVER PARALLEL THE WAYS OF MAN--THE ONE UNABLE TO EXIST WITHOUT THE OTHER!
IS THAT TRUE FOR US ALSO, DARLING! CAN THOR, THE GOD, LIVE WITHOUT JANE FOSTER, THE MORTAL?
I WOULD NOT HAVE IT SO, JANE! BUT SO HATH ODIN DECREED--
--SO MUST THOR OBEY!
MY SON--!
I SENSE WE MUST LEAVE THIS PLACE! THAT IT IS A TIME APART FROM US!
SO HAVE WE ALL, FATHER!
BUT IT HAS TAUGHT ME MUCH! THAT I AM OLD--
--AND YET HAVE MUCH TO LEARN!
AMEN!

NEXT ISSUE: THE SERVITOR COMMANDS!

Thor's Olympian comrade-in-arms earns a solo adventure in this never-before-reprinted story

Marvel Premiere #26, November 1975
"The Games of Raging Gods"

Writer: Bill Mantlo

Penciler: George Tuska

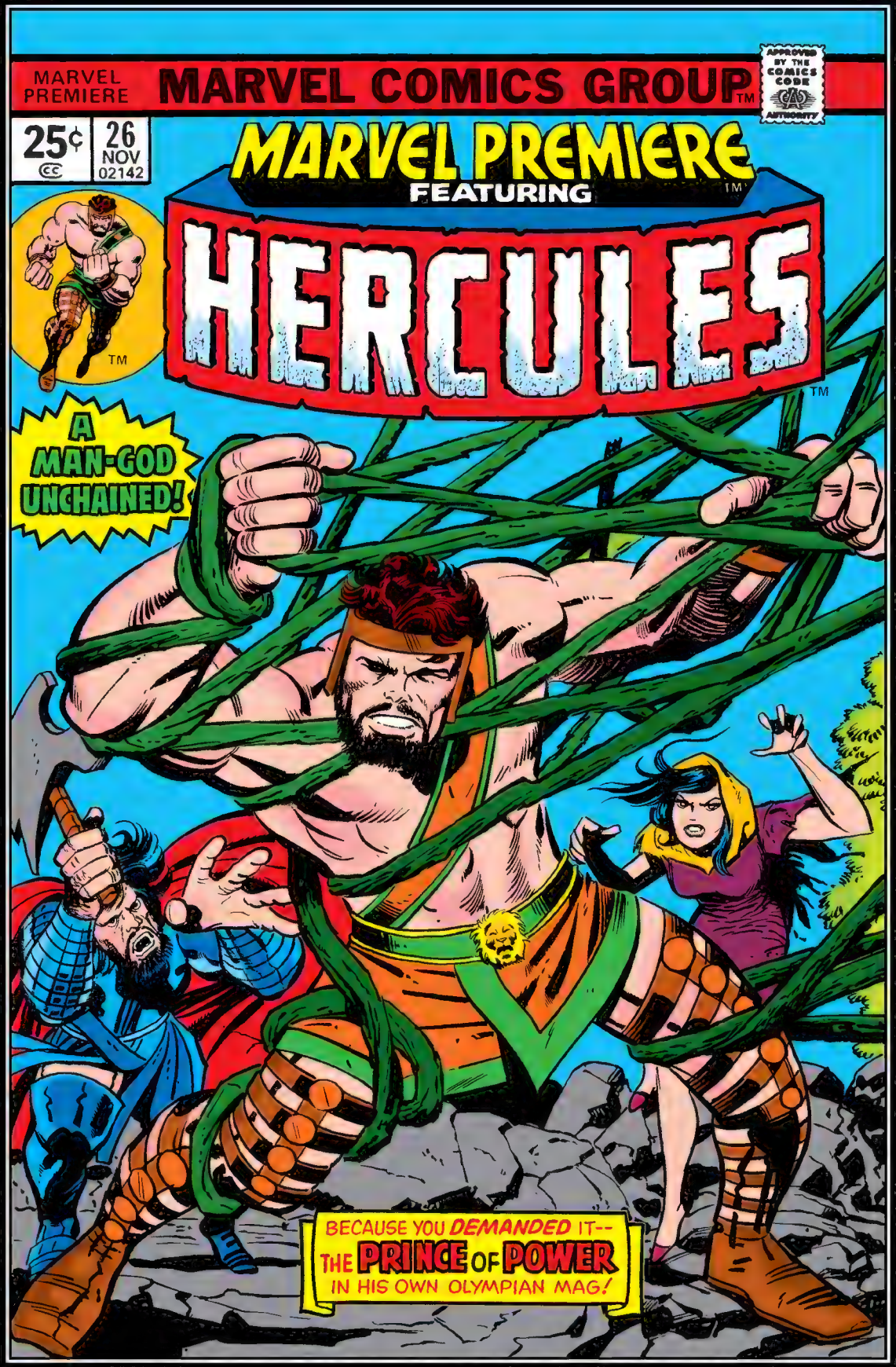
Inker: Vince Colletta

Letterers: Annette Kawecki & Karen Mantlo

Colorist: Irene Vartanoff

Editor: Marv Wolfman

Color & Art Reconstruction: All Thumbs Creative


MARVEL PREMIERE
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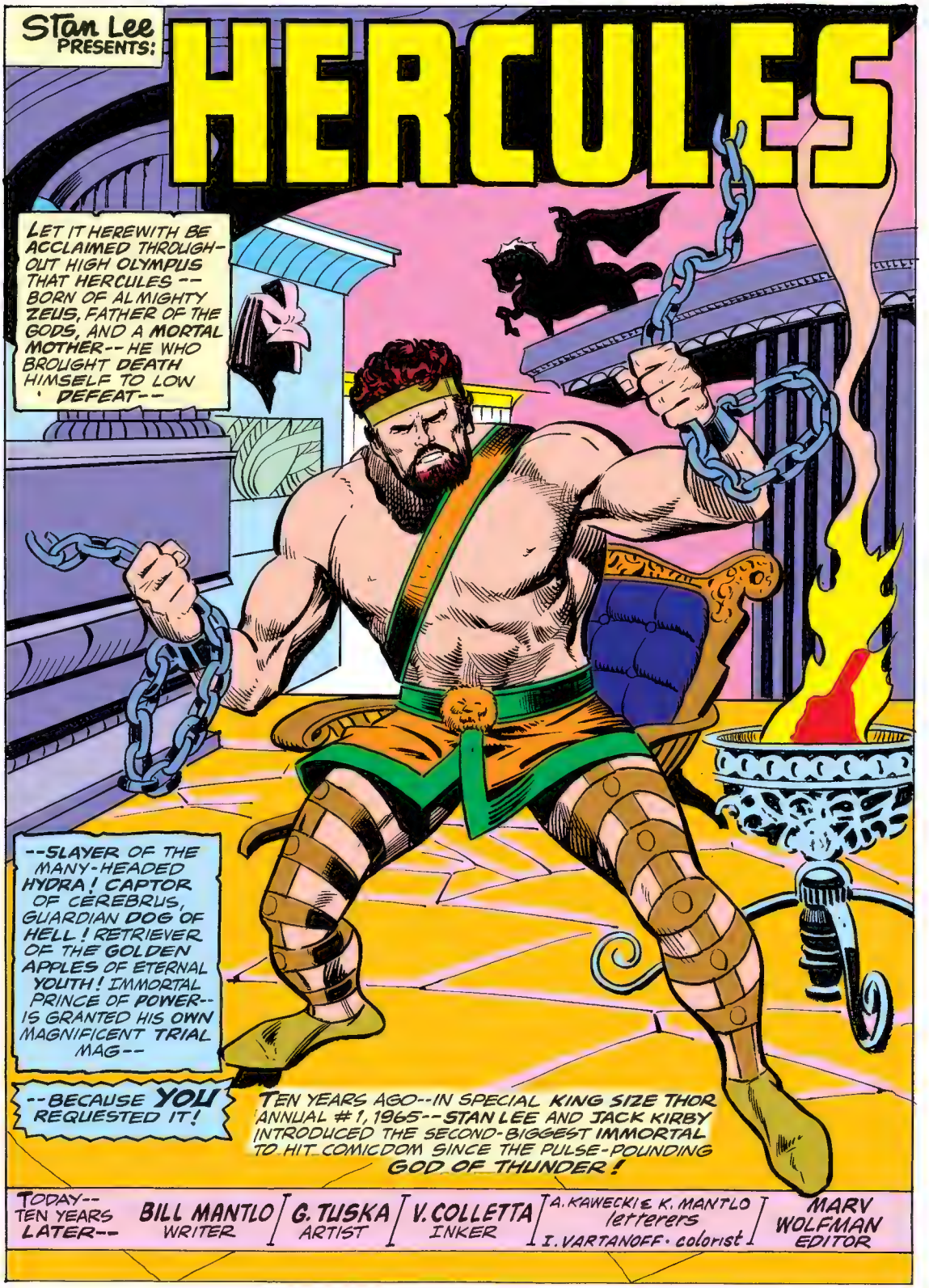
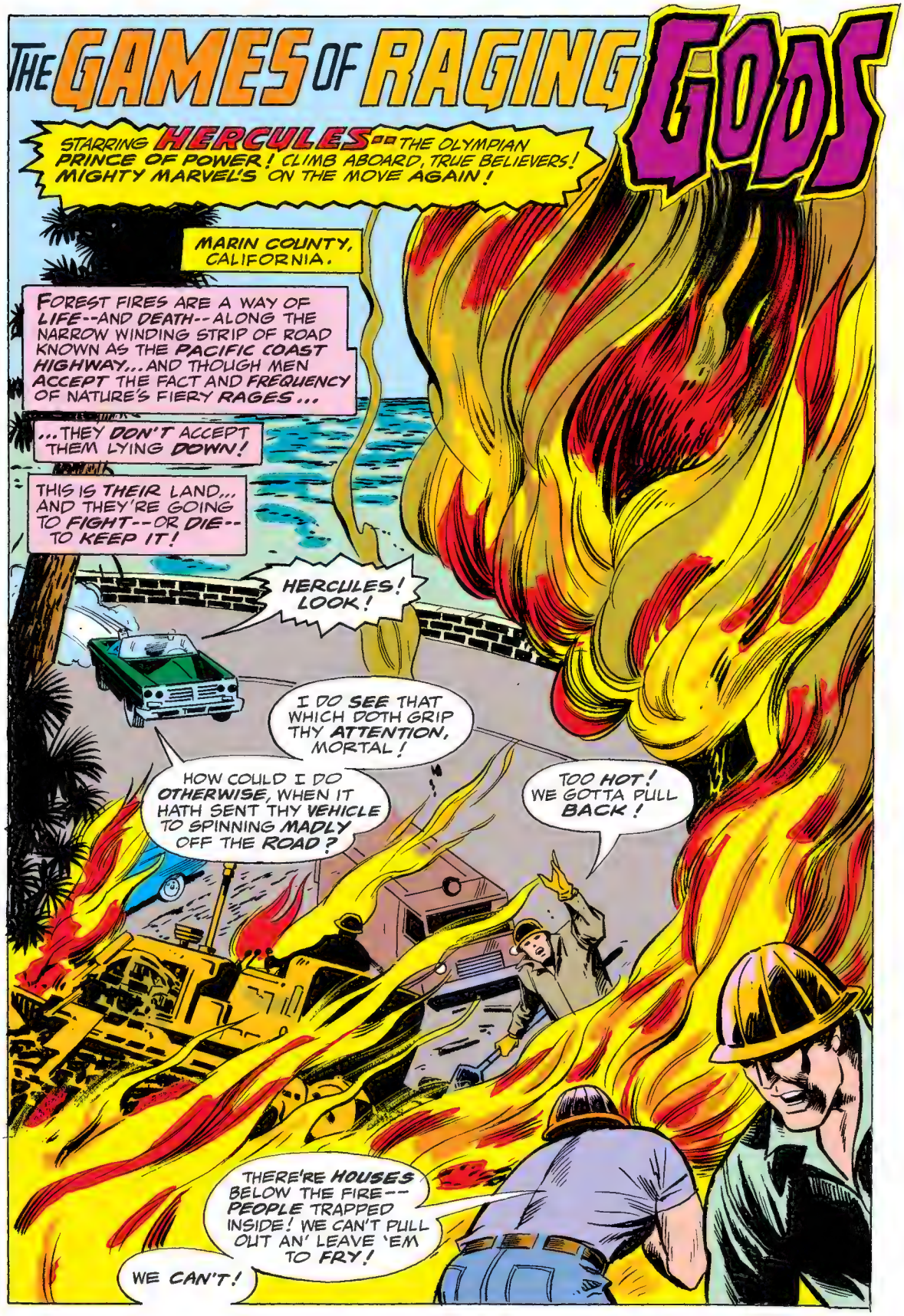
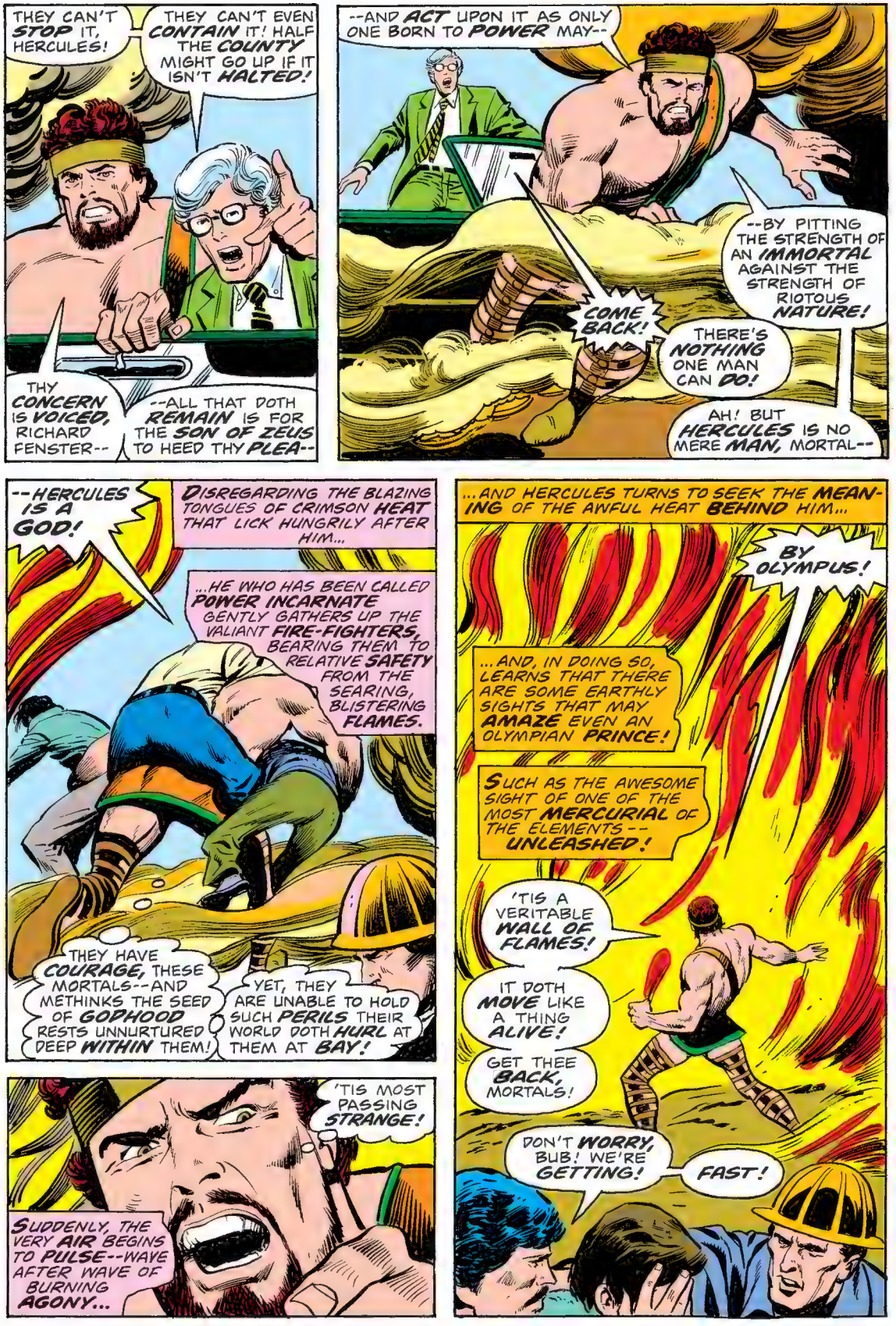
25¢ CC
26 NOV 02142
MARVEL PREMIERE
FEATURING
HERCULES™
A MAN-GOD UNCHAINED!
BECAUSE YOU DEMANDED IT--
THE PRINCE OF POWER
IN HIS OWN OLYMPIAN MAG!


STan Lee PRESENTS:
HERCULES
LET IT HEREWITH BE ACCLAIMED THROUGHOUT HIGH OLYMPUS THAT HERCULES -- BORN OF ALMIGHTY ZEUS, FATHER OF THE GODS, AND A MORTAL MOTHER -- HE WHO BROUGHT DEATH HIMSELF TO LOW DEFEAT --
--SLAYER OF THE MANY-HEADED HYDRA! CAPTOR OF CEREBRUS, GUARDIAN DOG OF HELL! RETRIEVER OF THE GOLDEN APPLES OF ETERNAL YOUTH! IMMORTAL PRINCE OF POWER -- IS GRANTED HIS OWN MAGNIFICENT TRIAL MAG --
--BECAUSE YOU REQUESTED IT!
TEN YEARS AGO--IN SPECIAL KING SIZE THOR ANNUAL #1, 1965--STAN LEE AND JACK KIRBY INTRODUCED THE SECOND-BIGGEST IMMORTAL TO HIT COMICDOM SINCE THE PULSE-POUNDING GOD OF THUNDER!
TODAY-- TEN YEARS LATER--
BILL MANTLO WRITER
G. TUSKA ARTIST
V. COLLETTA INKER
A. KAWECKI & K. MANTLO letterers
I. VARTANOFF • colorist
MARV WOLFMAN EDITOR

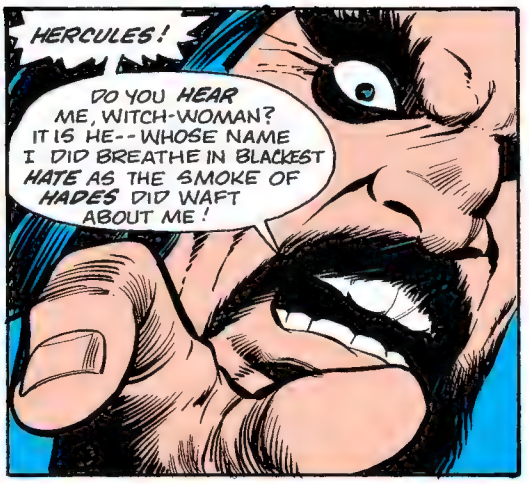

THE GAMES OF RAGING GODS
STARRING HERCULES... THE OLYMPIAN PRINCE OF POWER! CLIMB ABOARD, TRUE BELIEVERS! MIGHTY MARVEL'S ON THE MOVE AGAIN!
MARIN COUNTY, CALIFORNIA.
FOREST FIRES ARE A WAY OF LIFE--AND DEATH--ALONG THE NARROW WINDING STRIP OF ROAD KNOWN AS THE PACIFIC COAST HIGHWAY... AND THOUGH MEN ACCEPT THE FACT AND FREQUENCY OF NATURE'S FIERY RAGES...
...THEY DON'T ACCEPT THEM LYING DOWN!
THIS IS THEIR LAND... AND THEY'RE GOING TO FIGHT--OR DIE--TO KEEP IT!
HERCULES! LOOK!
I DO SEE THAT WHICH DOTH GRIP THY ATTENTION, MORTAL!
HOW COULD I DO OTHERWISE, WHEN IT HATH SENT THY VEHICLE TO SPINNING MADLY OFF THE ROAD?
TOO HOT! WE GOTTA PULL BACK!
THERE'RE HOUSES BELOW THE FIRE--PEOPLE TRAPPED INSIDE! WE CAN'T PULL OUT AN' LEAVE 'EM TO FRY!
WE CAN'T!

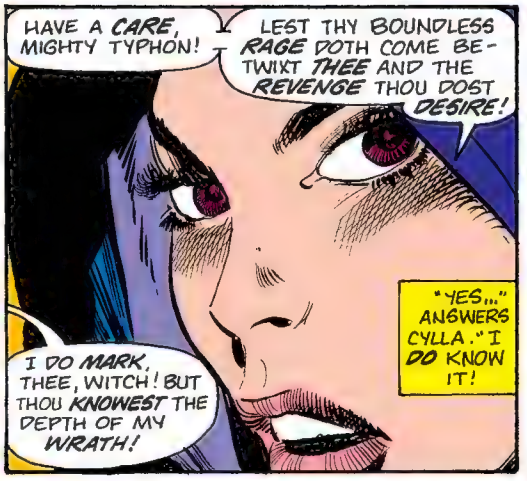

THEY CAN'T STOP IT, HERCULES!
THEY CAN'T EVEN CONTAIN IT! HALF THE COUNTY MIGHT GO UP IF IT ISN'T HALTED!
THY CONCERN IS VOICED, RICHARD FENSTER--
--ALL THAT DOTH REMAIN IS FOR THE SON OF ZEUS TO HEED THY PLEA--
--AND ACT UPON IT AS ONLY ONE BORN TO POWER MAY--
--BY PITTING THE STRENGTH OF AN IMMORTAL AGAINST THE STRENGTH OF RIOTOUS NATURE!
COME BACK!
THERE'S NOTHING ONE MAN CAN DO!
AH! BUT HERCULES IS NO MERE MAN, MORTAL--
--HERCULES IS A GOD!
DISREGARDING THE BLAZING TONGUES OF CRIMSON HEAT THAT LICK HUNGRILY AFTER HIM...
...HE WHO HAS BEEN CALLED POWER INCARNATE GENTLY GATHERS UP THE VALIANT FIRE-FIGHTERS, BEARING THEM TO RELATIVE SAFETY FROM THE SEARING, BLISTERING FLAMES.
THEY HAVE COURAGE, THESE MORTALS--AND METHINKS THE SEED OF GODHOOD RESTS UNNURTURED DEEP WITHIN THEM!
YET, THEY ARE UNABLE TO HOLD SUCH PERILS THEIR WORLD DOTH HURL AT THEM AT BAY!
'TIS MOST PASSING STRANGE!
SUDDENLY, THE VERY AIR BEGINS TO PULSE--WAVE AFTER WAVE OF BURNING AGONY...
...AND HERCULES TURNS TO SEEK THE MEANING OF THE AWFUL HEAT BEHIND HIM...
BY OLYMPUS!
...AND, IN DOING SO, LEARNS THAT THERE ARE SOME EARTHLY SIGHTS THAT MAY AMAZE EVEN AN OLYMPIAN PRINCE!
SUCH AS THE AWESOME SIGHT OF ONE OF THE MOST MERCURIAL OF THE ELEMENTS--UNLEASHED!
'TIS A VERITABLE WALL OF FLAMES!
IT DOTH MOVE LIKE A THING ALIVE!
GET THEE BACK, MORTALS!
DON'T WORRY, BUB! WE'RE GETTING!
FAST!

THE FLAMES DO ENGULF ME--
--AS IF WITH A MIND OF THEIR OWN!
YET, THEY DO HAUNT ME--AS THOUGH I DID KNOW THEM TO BE SOMETHING OTHER THAN THEY DO APPEAR!
STILL, THEY MUST BE STAYED FROM SPREADING FURTHER!
YON TREE! 'TIS VERILY A GIANT--OLDER, PERHAPS, THAN THESE MORTALS THAT DO DWELL IN ITS SHADOWS!
BUT THE FLAMES HATH CUT SHORT ITS LIFE--AND HERCULES HATH NEED OF IT!
WHAM!
BY THE GODS! ITS ROOTS RUN DEEP!
YET, IT DOTH HEAVE FROM THE EARTH BEFORE THE BATTERING ATTACK OF THE PRINCE OF POWER!
SWOOSH!
AGAINST SUCH A BLAZE--EVEN A GOD IS LIKE UNTO A FLEA!
YET, HERCULES WILL PIT FLAME AGAINST FLAME! THE INFERNO WILL PROVE MORE THAN A MATCH FOR ITSELF!
THE MIGHTY IMMORTAL LIFTS THE GIANT REDWOOD FROM THE SOIL... SPEARING ITS BLAZING TRUNK BEFORE HIM LIKE A LANCE-POINT...

...CREATING A BARRIER OF FLAMES BETWEEN HIMSELF, THE ROAD...
...AND THE THREATENING ADVANCE OF THE ORIGINAL FIRE.
FWROARRR!
'TIS DONE!
THE TIME OF DANGER IS PASSED!
YOU DID IT! YOU CREATED A WALL OF FIRE--
--STOPPING THE FIRST ONE WITH A STRIP OF BURNT-OUT EARTH!
'TWAS MY INTENTION, MORTAL!
IN THE FACE OF THY BRAVERY--I COULD DO NO LESS THAN SUCCEED!
THAT WAS INCREDIBLE, HERCULES!
SIMPLY INCREDIBLE!
THOU DOST PRAISE ME OVERMUCH, FRIEND! HERCULES ACCOMPLISHED MERELY THAT WHICH DID MOST NEED DOING!
HAVE IT YOUR WAY! I'M NOT ABOUT TO ARGUE WITH A GOD!
BUT COULD WE GET BACK TO DRIVING AGAIN ...PLEASE?
IT'S A LONG WAY BACK TO UCLA, AND YOU'VE A LECTURE TO DELIVER ON THE QUESTIONABLE GENEALOGIES OF A FEW OF YOUR FELLOW OLYMPIANS!
BUT, AS RICHARD FENSTER MOTORS HIS HEAVENLY COMPANION AWAY FROM THE STILL-SMOLDERING SCENE OF WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN A DISASTER...
...TWO PAIRS OF SINISTER EYES FOLLOW THEIR DEPARTURE...A LOW, GUTTERAL GROWL UTTERS FROM THE THROAT OF THE MORE MASSIVE OF THE TWO...
...AND THE SMOKE FROM THE GOD-QUENCHED FIRE TWINES SERPENTINE ABOUT THE SHADOWED FORM OF...

... TYPHON!
IT IS HE, CYLLA! THE ACCURSED SPAWN OF ZEUS!
THE LAST OF THE TREACHEROUS OUTCAST TITANS WHO HAD DARED DEFY ALMIGHTY ZEUS, FATHER OF THE OLYMPIAN GODS, IN THE DIM, DARK RECESSES OF A MYTH-RIDDEN PAST!
TYPHON, WHOM THE ANCIENTS HAD CLAIMED POSSESSED THE HEADS OF A HUNDRED LOATHSOME DRAGONS IN FEARFUL TRIBUTE TO HIS VICIOUS SAVAGERY!


HERCULES!
DO YOU HEAR ME, WITCH-WOMAN? IT IS HE--WHOSE NAME I DID BREATHE IN BLACKEST HATE AS THE SMOKE OF HADES DID WAFT ABOUT ME!


HAVE A CARE, MIGHTY TYPHON!
LEST THY BOUNDLESS RAGE DOTH COME BETWIXT THEE AND THE REVENGE THOU DOST DESIRE!
"YES..." ANSWERS CYLLA." I DO KNOW IT!
I DO MARK, THEE, WITCH! BUT THOU KNOWEST THE DEPTH OF MY WRATH!

"I KNOW THOU WAST RULER FOR A TIME, OF HIGH OLYMPUS, AFTER THOU DIDST PUT OUT THE SACRED PROMETHEAN FLAME, BANISHING THE DEATHLESS GODS TO LIMBO!
"I KNOW ALSO THAT THY RULE WAS CHALLENGED BY HERCULES, THE SON OF MIGHY ZEUS...

"... AND THOU WAST DEFEATED BY HIM AND HIS ONCE-FELLOW AVENGERS!" *
HEY! WATCH IT, FELLA!
THOSE ARROWS MAY NOT LOOK LIKE MUCH--BUT THEY COST PLENTY!
* WAY BACK LONG AGO, WHEN HERC, HAWKEYE, GOLIATH AND THE WASP MADE UP THE ROSTER OF EARTH'S MIGHTIEST HEROES ... AVENGERS 49 & 50--MARVELOUS MARV.

"ENOUGH, WITCH! THINKEST THOU I DO NOT RECALL MY SENTENCING BEFORE ZEUS? MY SHAME BEFORE THE ASSEMBLED GODS?"
THY PLEAS FOR MERCY WILL AVAIL THEE NAUGHT, USURPER!
NO QUARTER DIDST THOU GRANT OTHERS ... AND NONE CANST THOU EXPECT!
KRATOS! BIA! TAKE THOU THE PRISONER--
-- CAST HIM DOWN THE PIT OF HADES!
AYE, MY LIEGE!
NO, MERCIFUL ZEUS! HADES IS AN ABODE FOR THE DEAD!
--NOT FOR ONE WHO IS IMMORTAL! NOT FOR ONE WHO SHALL LANGUISH THERE FOREVER!
"I DO REMEMBER THAT FEARFUL FALL, CYLLA... DOWN THE STEAMING SHAFT INTO THE STYGIAN DEPTHS OF THE DREAD DOMAIN OF PLUTO!
A CURSE UPON THEE, LORD OF OLYMPUS!
TYPHON WILL RETURN!
"BUT HADES WAS NOT THE HELL THOU DIDST IMAGINE IT TO BE, MY LORD TYPHON! FOR I, CYLLA, DID DWELL THEREIN!
"AND LIKE MANY ANOTHER ... THOU DIDST FIND THIS WITCH MOST-- ENCHANTING!"
I MUST ESCAPE, CYLLA! THERE MUST BE A WAY TO THE VENGEANCE I DO SEEK!
IS IT SO HARD SHARING HELL WITH ME, MY TITAN? NAY, DO NOT ANSWER!
I DO KNOW THAT OTHER FLAME THAT DOTH BURN WITHIN THEE-- AND MAYHAPS IT DOTH COINCIDE WITH A PASSION OF MINE OWN!
THOU DIDST NOT CHOOSE THIS LIVING DEATH, MILORD! YET I DID FALL TO HADES OF MY OWN ACCORD--
--WHEN A CERTAIN PRINCE DID REJECT AN OFFER I DID MAKE HIM...
NEVER AGAIN WILL HERCULES TURN AWAY THE LOVE OF A DELPHIC ORACLE! WATCH, TYPHON!
WATCH! CYLLA WAS NOT BOUND BY DECREE TO HELL!
AND IF SHE DOTH CHOOSE TO LEAVE, WHO IS TO SAY THE WITCH MAY NOT TAKE HER PRESENT LOVER WITH HER?
"A SIMPLE SPELL DID I CAST...

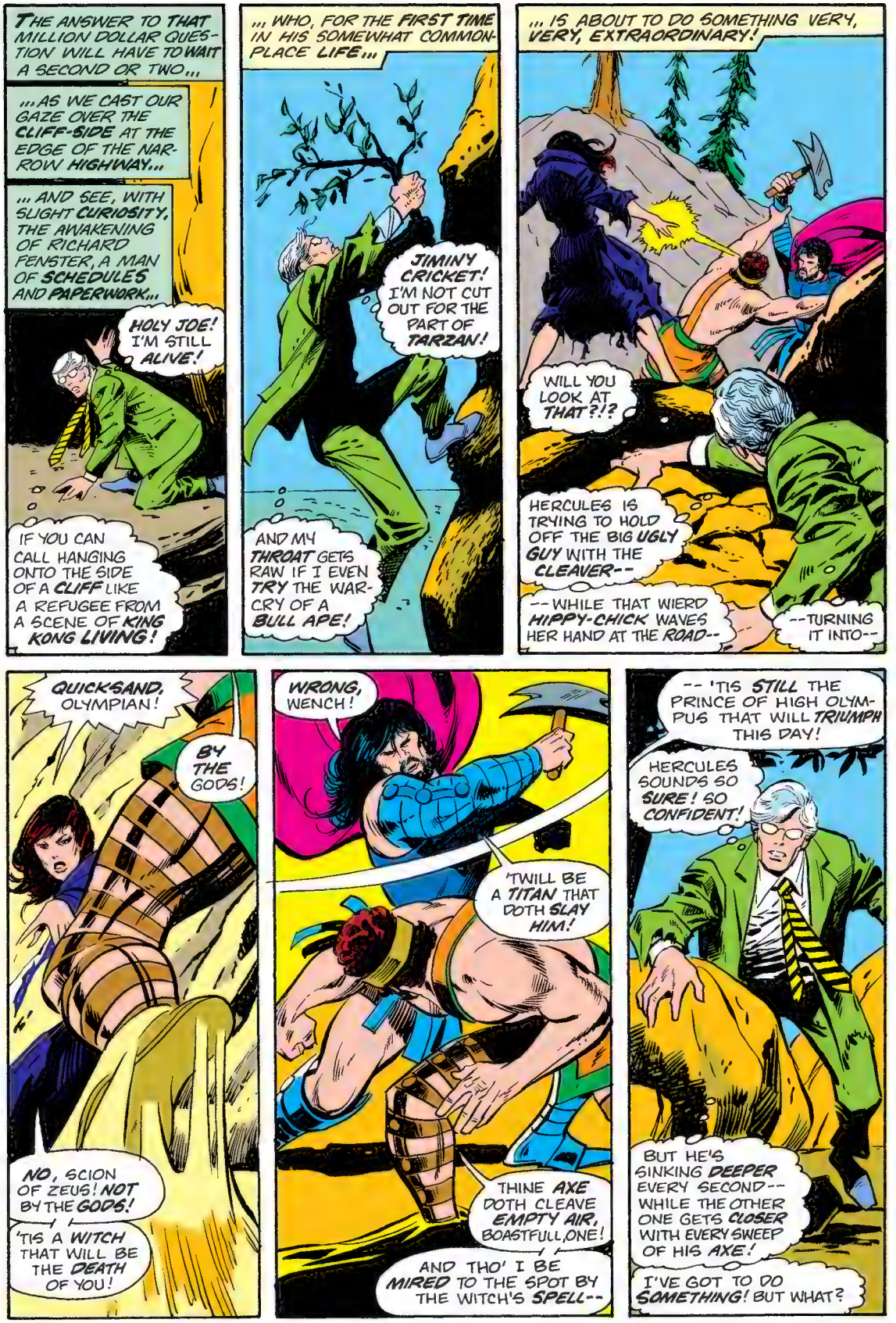
"... AND ONCE AGAIN THOU DIDST STAND IN THE SACRED TEMPLE OF PROMETHEUS...
"... BEFORE THE VERY FLAME INTO WHICH THE SON OF ZEUS DIDST CAST THINE AXE AND STRIP THEE OF THY POWER!"
TAKE IT, TYPHON! THOU HAST BUT TO REACH WITHIN THE FIRES!
AARRRHHHH! IT BURNS, WITCH!
IT BURNS!
"AYE, WITCH! BUT THOU DIDST NOT TELL ME THAT THE HEAT OF THAT FLAME...
"... WAS AKIN TO THE FLAME AT THE CENTER OF THE WORLD!
"MY AXE WAS MINE ONCE MORE... MY POWER DID RETURN AT ONCE! BUT..."
MY HAND!
THE HEAT DIDST FUSE MY HAND TO THE HILT OF MY AXE!
I CANNOT PULL IT FREE!
"AND MY SCREAMS HAD ALERTED THE GUARDIANS OF THE TEMPLE... KRATOS AND BIA, THE SERVING DOGS OF ZEUS!"
SO, TITAN! THOU HAST DARED TO RETURN!
ONLY TO BE CAST DOWN AGAIN, EVIL ONE!
NOT SO, CUR! TYPHON DOTH WIELD HIS BATTLE-AXE ONCE MORE--
--AND NOT EVEN ZEUS WILL STOP HIM NOW!
DO NOT ACT THE FOOL, TITAN-- LEST THE MIGHTY ONE HIMSELF SHOULD HEAR THEE!
KRATOS AND BIA ARE DONE-- FOR THE NONCE!
BUT STILL THE AXE DOTH CLEAVE TO MY HAND!
IT DOTH DRIVE ME TO MADNESS!
"AND IN MY ANGUISH, I DIDST STRIKE...
"... BUT THE RESULT OF MY BLOW NEITHER OF US DID EXPECT!
"MY AXE HAD GROWN IN POWER, TEMPERED IN THE FORGE OF THE PROMETHEAN FLAME...
"... AND IN STRIKING, WE DID PIERCE THE CLOUDS THAT SEPARATE OLYMPUS FROM THE WORLD OF THE MORTALS...
"... AND LIKE A COMET DID WE PLUMMET DOWN TO EARTH!

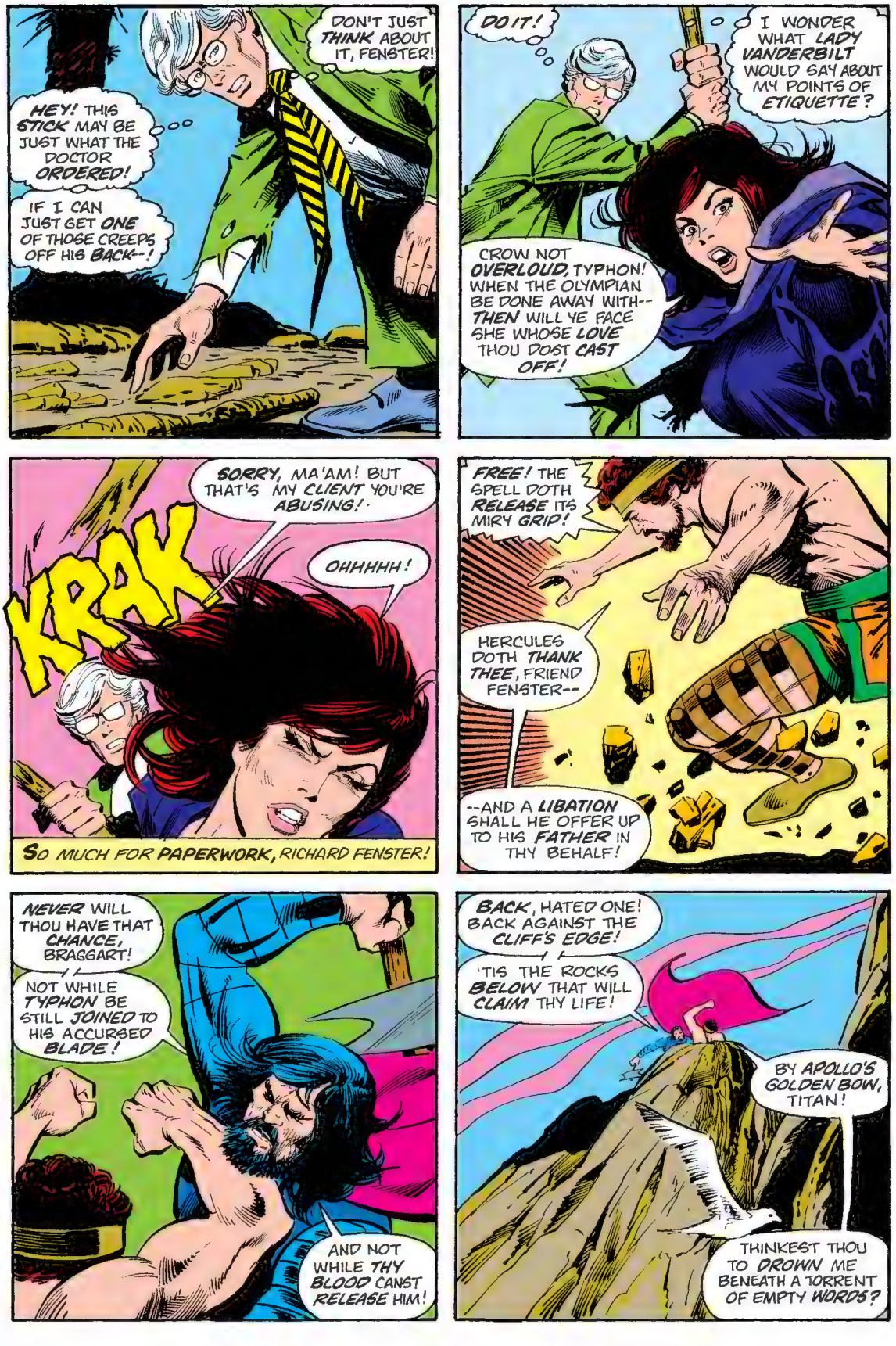
"AND SO FIERCE WAS THE HEAT OF OUR COMING...
"...THAT THE WOOD INTO WHICH WE DID DESCEND...
"...DID BURST INTO RAGING, UNEARTHLY FLAME!
THE AXE DOTH STILL REMAIN FUSED TO MY HAND!
'TIS A HATEFUL, BURNING LIMB THAT WILL NOT BE OFF!
CYLLA! HELP ME!
I CANNOT, MY LOVE!
THE FLAME THAT DID BIND THEE TO THY WEAPON WAS A FLAME OF THE HOLY GODS! NO MERE WITCH MAY COUNTER SUCH A FORCE!
BUT ORACLE I BE-- AND PROPHESY MAY BE OF SOME SMALL HELP TO THEE!
ONLY THE BLOOD OF THY WORST ENEMY WILL RELEASE THEE FROM THY BOND, TITAN! THAT AND NOTHING ELSE!
"THEN I WILL SOON BE FREE, CYLLA! FOR E'EN NOW HE WHO DOTH FIT THY PROPHESY DOTH COME IN VIEW! THE GUZZLING, GRINNING, JACKANAPE OF AN IMMORTAL IS HERE! HERCULES COMES -- AND NONE BUT HE IS TYPHON'S FOE!
"NONE BUT HIS BLOOD WILL FREE ME FROM MY CURSE!"
AH! THE FRUIT OF THIS MENDOCINO GRAPE IS AS SWEET AS THE NECTAR OF THE GODS, FRIEND FENSTER!
I'M SURE GLAD YOU'RE NOT DRIVING, HERCULES! IF A COP WAS TO STOP US NOW -- YOU'D BREAK RECORDS ON BALLOON TESTS FOR YEARS TO COME!

DOG OF A GOD!
DOST THOU HEAR ME, OLYMPIAN?
TYPHON SEEKS THY BLOOD! AND HAVE IT HE SHALL!
WHOOM!
HURL TO THY DEATH, HERCULES!
WHEN THE ROCKS BELOW CLAIM THEE -- THEN WILL TYPHON BE FREE OF HIS HATED CURSE!
TYPHON!
I KNOW NOT FROM WHENCE THOU COME, VILLAIN--
--BUT 'TWILL TAKE MORE THAN THY COWARDLY ATTACK TO FELL THE PRINCE OF POWER!
BUT FIRST MUST THE MORTAL BE SAVED!
HERCULES DRAGS HIS UNCONSCIOUS LECTURE AGENT FROM THE PLUMMETING VEHICLE...
...AND SECONDS LATER...
KER-WHAM!
...THE CAR BECOMES JUST ANOTHER STATISTIC FOR RICHARD FENSTER'S INSURANCE COMPANY!
THE SHOCK DIDST CAUSE THE MORTAL TO LOSE CONSCIOUSNESS!
'TIS JUST AS WELL! HE WOULD BE OF LITTLE USE IN THE BATTLE TO COME!
AND TYPHON DOTH ONCE MORE HOLD HIS BATTLE-AXE! 'TWILL BE NO EASY VICTORY, I FEAR!
HERCULES DOES LIVE YET, TITAN! HIS BLOOD IS NOT YET THINE!
HAVE IT I MUST, SON OF ZEUS!
AND HAVE IT I WILL!
WHOOM!
THOU DOST USE THINE AXE TO SHATTER THE VERY ROAD, TITAN!

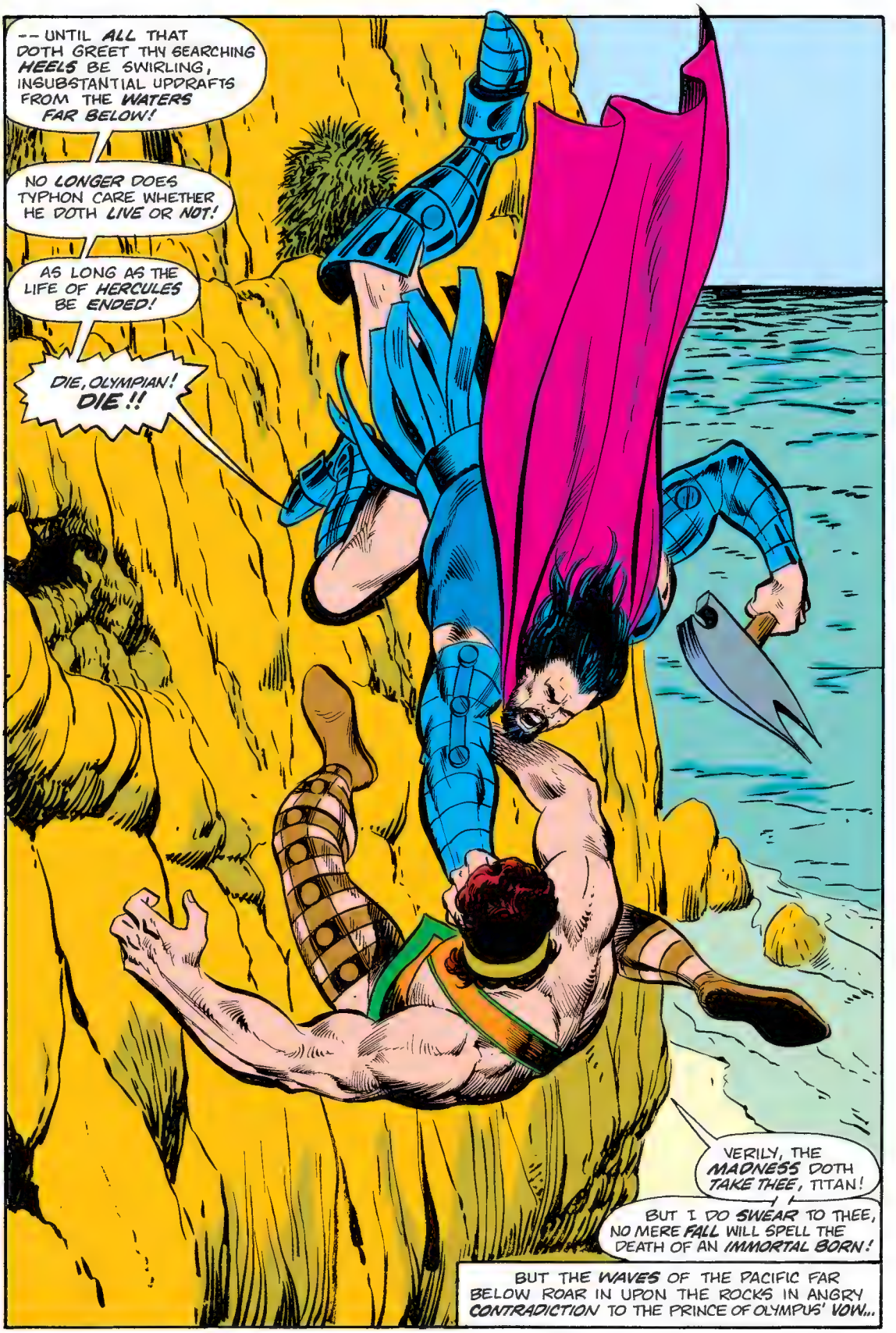
AND NOW THOU DOST HURL THE STONES UPON ME!
KRAM!
YET HERCULES HAS LEVELLED ENTIRE MOUNTAINS, BASE ONE! OF WHAT MATTER BE A FEW SMALL STONES TO-- UNNHH!
THERE BE MORE THAN THINE EVIL AT WORK HERE, TYPHON! HERCULES DOES SUSPECT ANOTHERS HAND IN THIS!
THOU WILT NOT HAVE LONG TO PONDER IT, GODLING!
THY HEAD WILL ROLL ERE THOU DOST FIND THE ANSWER!
ONCE BEFORE WE DID BATTLE, USURPER--
--AND THO' THOU HADST DEFEATED ALL THE GODS THRU BASE TREACHERY--
--STILL DID HERCULES BEST THEE! STILL DID THE SON OF ALL-SEEING ZEUS TRIUMPH!
AARRGGHHH!
THOM!
METHINKS THIS TRIAL WILL HAVE NO DIFFERENT END!
THEN THOU THINKEST WRONGLY, OLYMPIAN!
THERE IS ANOTHER BY MY SIDE! ONE WHO HAS GOOD CAUSE TO HATE THEE!
THO' THOU HAST AN ARMY ASSEMBLED BEHIND THEE, TITAN--
WAP!
--STILL WOULDST FIND THAT THOU DOST BATTLE IN VAIN!
PERHAPS, PRINCE! AND PERHAPS NOT!
TURN AND FACE THE WRATH OF SHE THOU DIDST SPURN, HERCULES!
TURN THEE AND TEST THE POWER OF CYLLA--
--THE WITCH OF DELPHOS!
BY THE BEARD OF MY FATHER! THE VERY TREES DO RESPOND TO THE PROPHETESS' CALL AND SEEK TO ENSNARE ME!
AND FOR EACH ONE I DO RIP LOOSE-- TWO MORE DO TAKE ITS PLACE!

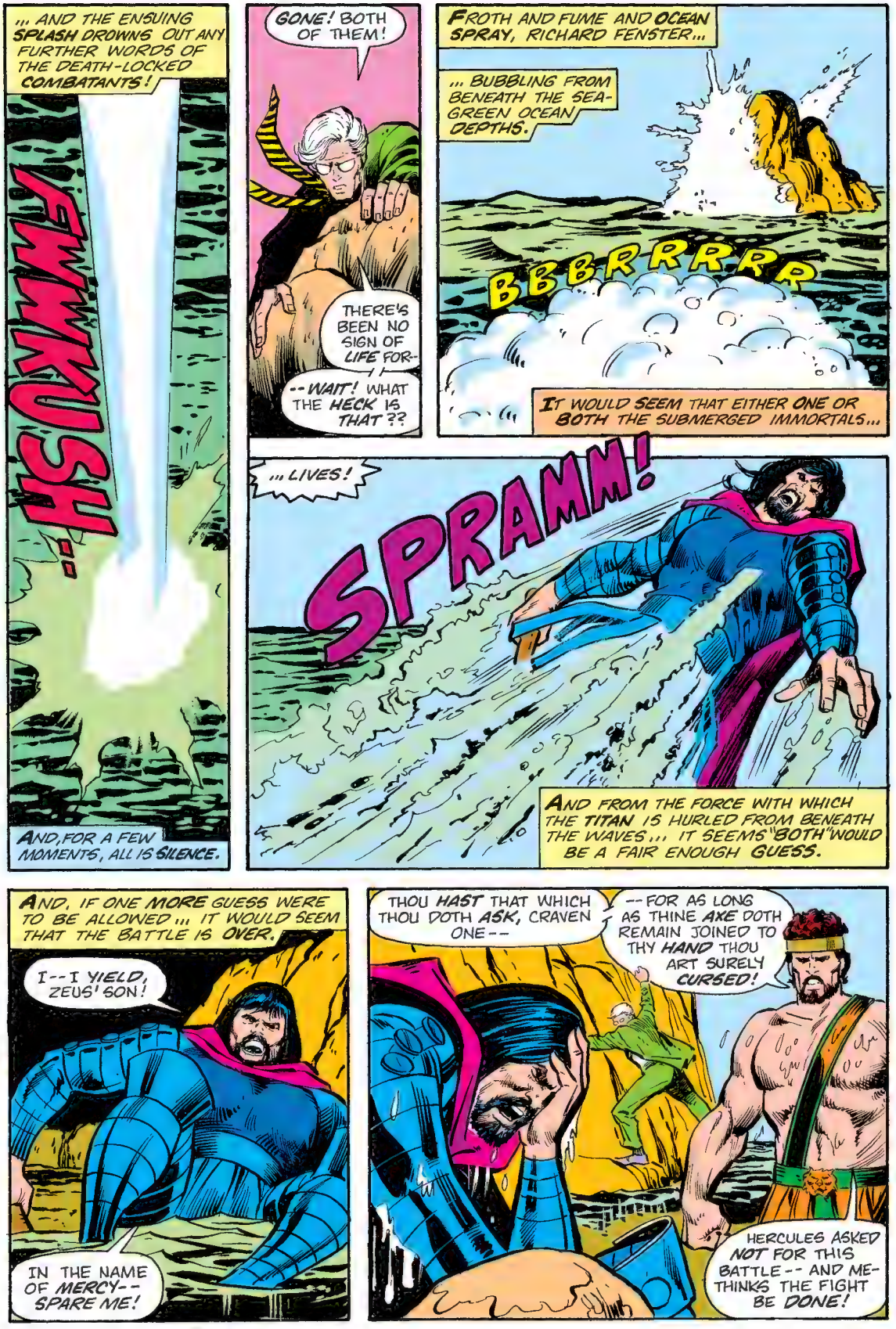
NO, TEMPTRESS! HIS DEFEAT IS TO BE MINE -- AND MINE ALONE!
YOU WOULD SPEAK THUS TO ME, TITAN?
TO THE ONE THAT DIDST SAVE THEE?
THERE BE NOT THE TIME FOR THAT NOW, WOMAN!
ALL THAT BE OF ANY IMPORTANCE IS THE DEATH OF THE PRINCE OF POWER!
FIE UPON THEE, KNAVE!
THINKEST THOU HERCULES BE SOME JELLY-KNEED SERVING WENCH THAT A GLOWER FROM THY FEARSOME COUNTENANCE WOULDST CAUSE HIS STRENGTH TO LEAVE HIM?
RIIPPP
I SAY THEE NAY, VILLAIN! AND ONCE FREE OF THIS ENTANGLING VEGETATION--
-- THE SON OF ZEUS WILL MAKE THEE WISH THOU HADST NEVER LEFT THE DARK DOMAIN OF PLUTO!
KA-WHOOM!
GET THEE BACK TO HADES, TITAN!
MY HEART DOTH SCREAM FOR VENGEANCE AGAINST BOTH MY ERSTWHILE LOVERS!
YET UPON WHICH SHALL CYLLA LEVEL HER CURSES? WHICH IMMORTAL SHALL DIE BEGGING THE ORACLE'S FORGIVENESS?

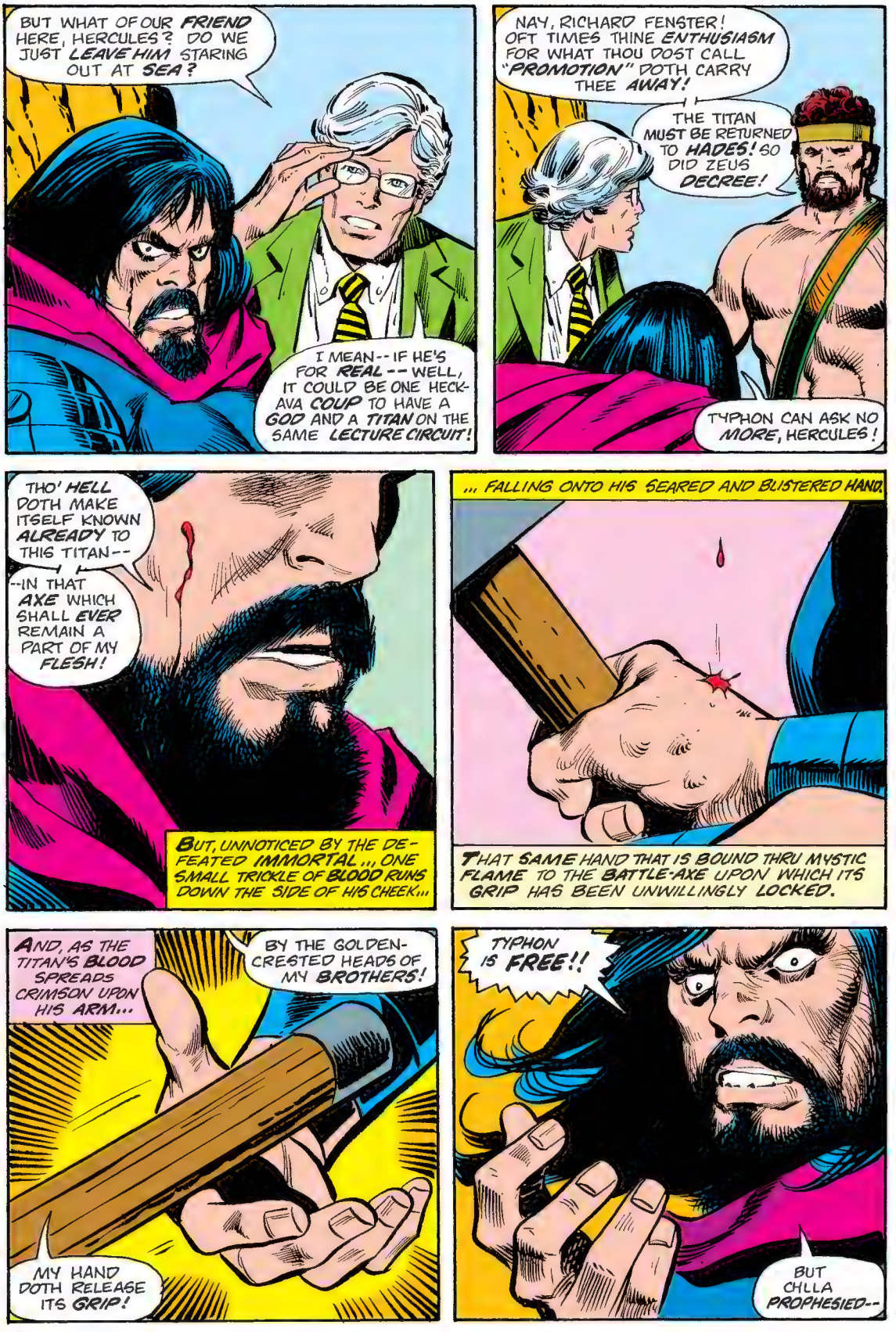

THE ANSWER TO THAT MILLION DOLLAR QUESTION WILL HAVE TO WAIT A SECOND OR TWO...
...AS WE CAST OUR GAZE OVER THE CLIFF-SIDE AT THE EDGE OF THE NARROW HIGHWAY...
...AND SEE, WITH SLIGHT CURIOSITY, THE AWAKENING OF RICHARD FENSTER, A MAN OF SCHEDULES AND PAPERWORK...
HOLY JOE! I'M STILL ALIVE!
IF YOU CAN CALL HANGING ONTO THE SIDE OF A CLIFF LIKE A REFUGEE FROM A SCENE OF KING KONG LIVING!
...WHO, FOR THE FIRST TIME IN HIS SOMEWHAT COMMONPLACE LIFE...
JIMINY CRICKET! I'M NOT CUT OUT FOR THE PART OF TARZAN!
AND MY THROAT GETS RAW IF I EVEN TRY THE WAR-CRY OF A BULL APE!
...IS ABOUT TO DO SOMETHING VERY, VERY, EXTRAORDINARY!
WILL YOU LOOK AT THAT?!?
HERCULES IS TRYING TO HOLD OFF THE BIG UGLY GUY WITH THE CLEAVER--
--WHILE THAT WIERD HIPPY-CHICK WAVES HER HAND AT THE ROAD--
--TURNING IT INTO--
QUICKSAND, OLYMPIAN!
BY THE GODS!
NO, SCION OF ZEUS! NOT BY THE GODS!
'TIS A WITCH THAT WILL BE THE DEATH OF YOU!
WRONG, WENCH!
'TWILL BE A TITAN THAT DOTH SLAY HIM!
THINE AXE DOTH CLEAVE EMPTY AIR, BOASTFULL,ONE!
AND THO' I BE MIRED TO THE SPOT BY THE WITCH'S SPELL--
-- 'TIS STILL THE PRINCE OF HIGH OLYMPUS THAT WILL TRIUMPH THIS DAY!
HERCULES SOUNDS SO SURE! SO CONFIDENT!
BUT HE'S SINKING DEEPER EVERY SECOND-- WHILE THE OTHER ONE GETS CLOSER WITH EVERY SWEEP OF HIS AXE!
I'VE GOT TO DO SOMETHING! BUT WHAT?

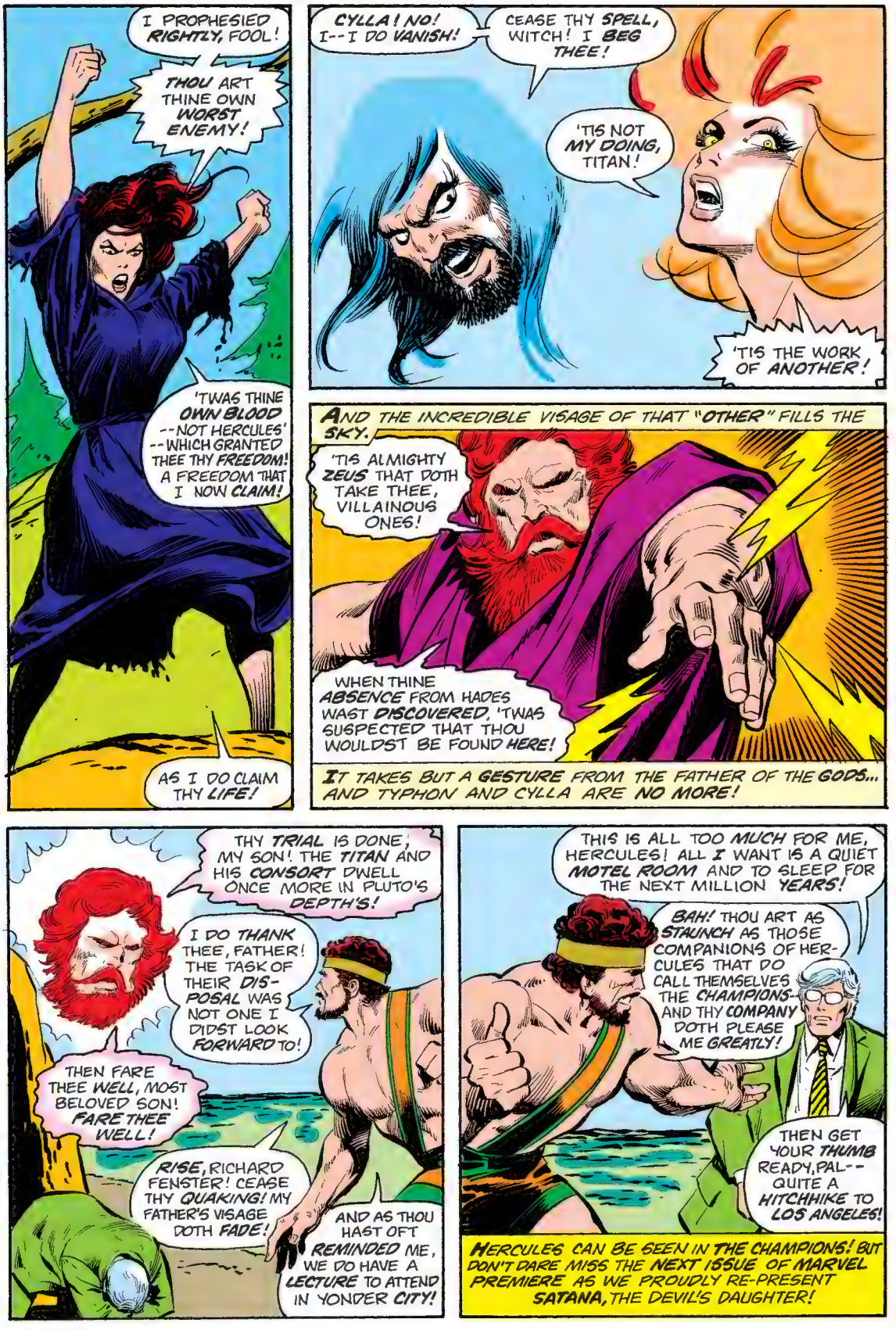

DON'T JUST THINK ABOUT IT, FENSTER!
HEY! THIS STICK MAY BE JUST WHAT THE DOCTOR ORDERED!
IF I CAN JUST GET ONE OF THOSE CREEPS OFF HIS BACK--!
DO IT!
I WONDER WHAT LADY VANDERBILT WOULD SAY ABOUT MY POINTS OF ETIQUETTE?
CROW NOT OVERLOUD, TYPHON! WHEN THE OLYMPIAN BE DONE AWAY WITH-- THEN WILL YE FACE SHE WHOSE LOVE THOU DOST CAST OFF!
KRAK
SORRY, MA'AM! BUT THAT'S MY CLIENT YOU'RE ABUSING!
OHHHHH!
SO MUCH FOR PAPERWORK, RICHARD FENSTER!
FREE! THE SPELL DOTH RELEASE ITS MIRY GRIP!
HERCULES DOTH THANK THEE, FRIEND FENSTER--
--AND A LIBATION SHALL HE OFFER UP TO HIS FATHER IN THY BEHALF!
NEVER WILL THOU HAVE THAT CHANCE, BRAGGART!
NOT WHILE TYPHON BE STILL JOINED TO HIS ACCURSED BLADE!
AND NOT WHILE THY BLOOD CANST RELEASE HIM!
BACK, HATED ONE! BACK AGAINST THE CLIFF'S EDGE!
'TIS THE ROCKS BELOW THAT WILL CLAIM THY LIFE!
BY APOLLO'S GOLDEN BOW, TITAN!
THINKEST THOU TO DROWN ME BENEATH A TORRENT OF EMPTY WORDS?

THOU WOULDST DARE TO MOCK ME, OLYMPIAN?
FOR THAT THY DEATH WILL NOT COME EASY!
METHINKS MY DEATH WILL NOT COME AT ALL, MAD ONE!
FOR THRU THY WORDS I DO SEE THAT THOU ART MAD!
KRAM!
THE PAIN OF THY HAND DOTH RAGE WITHIN THY MIND--
--DRIVING THEE O'ER THE EDGE OF INSANITY!
THOU ART A LIAR, HERCULES!
AND ONCE I TEAR FREE THESE CABLES THAT DO BORDER THE MORTALS' ROAD--
-- I WILL CHOKE THE TRUTH FROM OUT THY GASPING THROAT!
THOU DOST RAVE, EXILE! AND IN TRUTH--
--'TWOULD SEEM THAT THOU WERE BANISHED NOT ONLY FROM THE HALLS OF GREAT OLYMPUS--
--BUT FROM THE BOUNDS OF SANITY ITSELF!
I WILL HEAR NO MORE, ILLBEGOTTEN SPAWN OF GOD AND MORTAL!
I WILL HEAR NO MORE!
THOU HAST MADE A RASH MISTAKE, TITAN--
SNAP!
--CASTING THY SLANDEROUS FILTH UPON THE BLESSEDNESS OF HERCULES' LINEAGE!
AND FOR THAT SHALL THOU TASTE THE DUST OF BITTER DEFEAT!
FOR THAT WILL HERCULES IGNORE THY PLEAS FOR QUARTER!
THOU HAST GONE TOO FAR, CUR!
WE SHALL SEE, HERCULES--FOR E'EN NOW DOES TYPHON FORCE THEE BACK--


-- UNTIL ALL THAT DOTH GREET THY SEARCHING HEELS BE SWIRLING, INSUBSTANTIAL UPDRAFTS FROM THE WATERS FAR BELOW!
NO LONGER DOES TYPHON CARE WHETHER HE DOTH LIVE OR NOT!
AS LONG AS THE LIFE OF HERCULES BE ENDED!
DIE, OLYMPIAN! DIE!!
VERILY, THE MADNESS DOTH TAKE THEE, TITAN!
BUT I DO SWEAR TO THEE, NO MERE FALL WILL SPELL THE DEATH OF AN IMMORTAL BORN!
BUT THE WAVES OF THE PACIFIC FAR BELOW ROAR IN UPON THE ROCKS IN ANGRY CONTRADICTION TO THE PRINCE OF OLYMPUS' VOW...

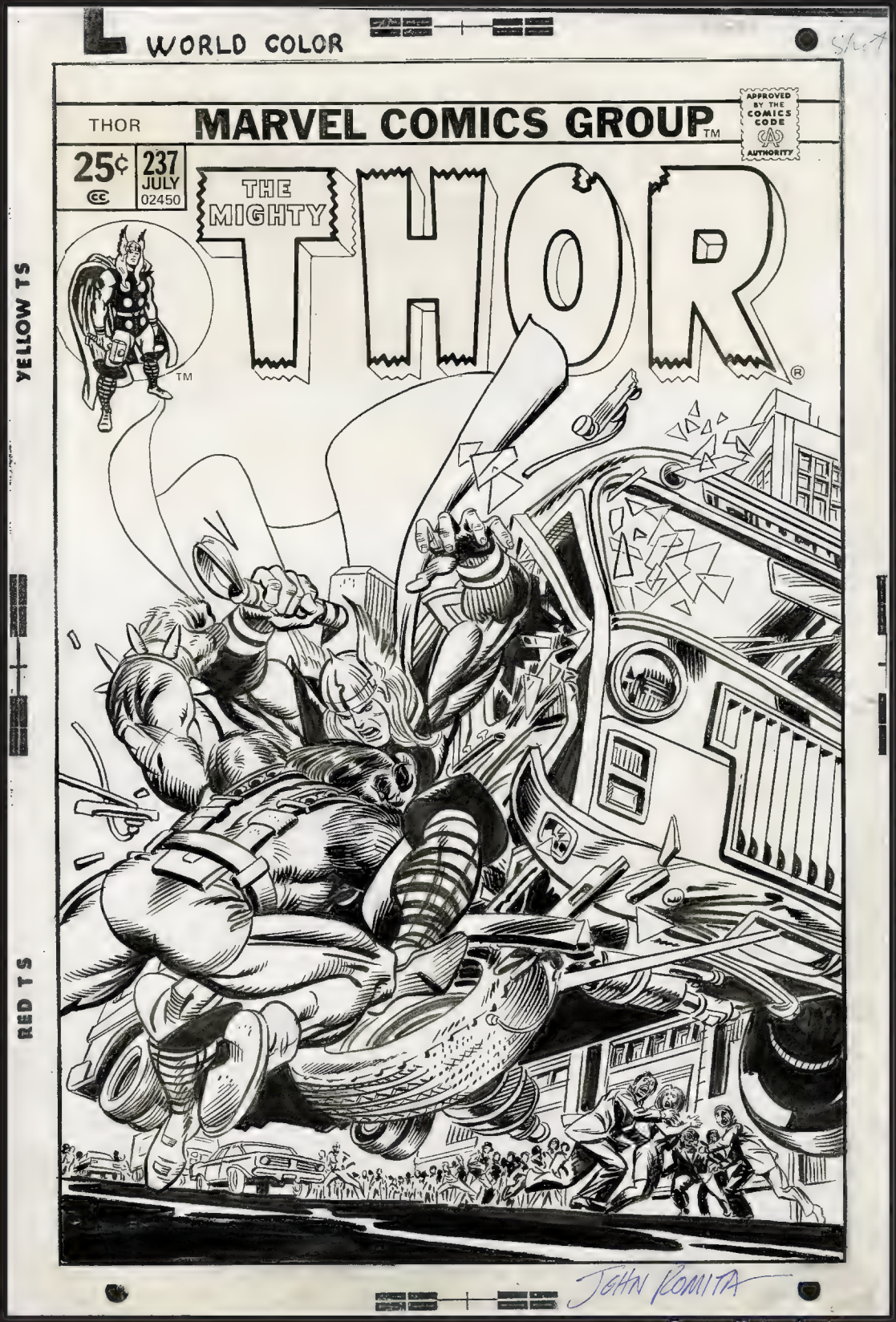

... AND THE ENSUING SPLASH DROWNS OUT ANY FURTHER WORDS OF THE DEATH-LOCKED COMBATANTS!
SHWASH!!
AND, FOR A FEW MOMENTS, ALL IS SILENCE.
GONE! BOTH OF THEM!
THERE'S BEEN NO SIGN OF LIFE FOR-
--WAIT! WHAT THE HECK IS THAT??
FROTH AND FUME AND OCEAN SPRAY, RICHARD FENSTER...
... BUBBLING FROM BENEATH THE SEA-GREEN OCEAN DEPTHS.
BBBRRRRRP
IT WOULD SEEM THAT EITHER ONE OR BOTH THE SUBMERGED IMMORTALS...
... LIVES!
SPRAMM!
AND FROM THE FORCE WITH WHICH THE TITAN IS HURLED FROM BENEATH THE WAVES... IT SEEMS "BOTH" WOULD BE A FAIR ENOUGH GUESS.
AND, IF ONE MORE GUESS WERE TO BE ALLOWED... IT WOULD SEEM THAT THE BATTLE IS OVER.
I--I YIELD, ZEUS' SON!
IN THE NAME OF MERCY-- SPARE ME!
THOU HAST THAT WHICH THOU DOTH ASK, CRAVEN ONE--
--FOR AS LONG AS THINE AXE DOTH REMAIN JOINED TO THY HAND THOU ART SURELY CURSED!
HERCULES ASKED NOT FOR THIS BATTLE-- AND METHINKS THE FIGHT BE DONE!


BUT WHAT OF OUR FRIEND HERE, HERCULES? DO WE JUST LEAVE HIM STARING OUT AT SEA?
I MEAN--IF HE'S FOR REAL--WELL, IT COULD BE ONE HECK-AVA COUP TO HAVE A GOD AND A TITAN ON THE SAME LECTURE CIRCUIT!
NAY, RICHARD FENSTER! OFT TIMES THINE ENTHUSIASM FOR WHAT THOU DOST CALL "PROMOTION" DOTH CARRY THEE AWAY!
THE TITAN MUST BE RETURNED TO HADES! SO DID ZEUS DECREE!
TYPHON CAN ASK NO MORE, HERCULES!
THO' HELL DOTH MAKE ITSELF KNOWN ALREADY TO THIS TITAN--
--IN THAT AXE WHICH SHALL EVER REMAIN A PART OF MY FLESH!
BUT, UNNOTICED BY THE DE-FEATED IMMORTAL... ONE SMALL TRICKLE OF BLOOD RUNS DOWN THE SIDE OF HIS CHEEK...
... FALLING ONTO HIS SEARED AND BLISTERED HAND.
THAT SAME HAND THAT IS BOUND THRU MYSTIC FLAME TO THE BATTLE-AXE UPON WHICH ITS GRIP HAS BEEN UNWILLINGLY LOCKED.
AND, AS THE TITAN'S BLOOD SPREADS CRIMSON UPON HIS ARM...
BY THE GOLDEN-CRESTED HEADS OF MY BROTHERS!
MY HAND DOTH RELEASE ITS GRIP!
TYPHON IS FREE!!
BUT CHLLA PROPHESIED--


I PROPHESIED RIGHTLY, FOOL!
THOU ART THINE OWN WORST ENEMY!
'TWAS THINE OWN BLOOD --NOT HERCULES' --WHICH GRANTED THEE THY FREEDOM! A FREEDOM THAT I NOW CLAIM!
AS I DO CLAIM THY LIFE!
CYLLA! NO! I--I DO VANISH!
CEASE THY SPELL, WITCH! I BEG THEE!
'TIS NOT MY DOING, TITAN!
'TIS THE WORK OF ANOTHER!
AND THE INCREDIBLE VISAGE OF THAT "OTHER" FILLS THE SKY.
'TIS ALMIGHTY ZEUS THAT DOTH TAKE THEE, VILLAINOUS ONES!
WHEN THINE ABSENCE FROM HADES WAST DISCOVERED, 'TWAS SUSPECTED THAT THOU WOULDST BE FOUND HERE!
IT TAKES BUT A GESTURE FROM THE FATHER OF THE GODS... AND TYPHON AND CYLLA ARE NO MORE!
THY TRIAL IS DONE, MY SON! THE TITAN AND HIS CONSORT DWELL ONCE MORE IN PLUTO'S DEPTH'S!
I DO THANK THEE, FATHER! THE TASK OF THEIR DISPOSAL WAS NOT ONE I DIDST LOOK FORWARD TO!
THEN FARE THEE WELL, MOST BELOVED SON! FARE THEE WELL!
RISE, RICHARD FENSTER! CEASE THY QUAKING! MY FATHER'S VISAGE DOTH FADE!
AND AS THOU HAST OFT REMINDED ME, WE DO HAVE A LECTURE TO ATTEND IN YONDER CITY!
THIS IS ALL TOO MUCH FOR ME, HERCULES! ALL I WANT IS A QUIET MOTEL ROOM AND TO SLEEP FOR THE NEXT MILLION YEARS!
BAH! THOU ART AS STAUNCH AS THOSE COMPANIONS OF HERCULES THAT DO CALL THEMSELVES THE CHAMPIONS-- AND THY COMPANY DOTH PLEASE ME GREATLY!
THEN GET YOUR THUMB READY, PAL-- QUITE A HITCHHIKE TO LOS ANGELES!
HERCULES CAN BE SEEN IN THE CHAMPIONS! BUT DON'T DARE MISS THE NEXT ISSUE OF MARVEL PREMIERE AS WE PROUDLY RE-PRESENT SATANA, THE DEVIL'S DAUGHTER!

Cover from *Giant-Size Thor* #1 (1975),
reprinting *Journey Into Mystery* #106, *Annual* #1 & *The Mighty Thor Annual* #2

The Mighty Thor #237 cover original art
by Gil Kane & Al Milgrom with John Romita



Courtesy HeritageAuctions.com

The Mighty Thor #241 cover original art
by Jack Kirby & Frank Giacoia

Courtesy HeritageAuctions.com

BIOGRAPHIES

GERRY CONWAY

In 1969, 16-year-old Gerry Conway was shopping short stories to DC and Marvel for their horror anthology books. By 1976, Conway had worked his way up to Marvel's editor in chief. In between, he logged highlight after highlight as writer for both companies.

After establishing a pedigree with horror short stories, Conway quickly became the regular writer of *Daredevil*, *Sub-Mariner* and *Iron Man*. He also began runs on *The Amazing Spider-Man* and *Thor*, picking up both titles from none other than Stan Lee. He scripted both for nearly 50 issues, writing controversial and classic tales including "The Death of Gwen Stacy," the first appearance of the Punisher, and the introduction of Harry Osborn as the Green Goblin. Cueing off his early interest in horror stories, Conway took advantage of Marvel's burgeoning line of horror comics, launching *Werewolf By Night* and *Man-Thing*, as well as writing the first issue of *Tomb of Dracula*.

In 1976, he was handed the top job at Marvel before transitioning to DC Comics. One of his first big assignments was writing the script for one of the first inter-company crossovers, *Superman vs. The Amazing Spider-Man*. Shortly thereafter, he began a long tenure on prime DC titles like *Superboy & The Legion of Super-Heroes*, *World's Finest* and *Wonder Woman*. He also introduced Firestorm with Al Milgrom in 1978, scribing all five issues of the short-lived '70s incarnation.

As the '80s dawned, he started a long run writing both key Batman titles, *Detective Comics* and *Batman*, and continued his run on *Justice League of America*, a stint that began in earnest in 1978 and would end with the dismantling of the infamous JLA Detroit in 1986. During this era, he also revived Firestorm with artist Pat Broderick; this time the title found traction and Conway wrote the first 53 issues. A return to Marvel in the late '80s saw Conway tackling two of the three Spider-Man titles: *The Spectacular Spider-Man* and *Web of Spider-Man*.

During this period, Conway was asserting himself as a writer in film and television. His early '80s screenplay collaborations with Roy Thomas resulted in the animated film *Fire and Ice* and barbarian sequel *Conan the Destroyer*. By the late '80s, his opportunities in television writing had expanded, and he left comics to pursue writing and producing for *Matlock*, *Father Dowling Mysteries*, *Diagnosis: Murder* and *Law & Order*.

Today, Conway continues writing and producing for television and has recently returned to script the occasional comic. He resides in California with his wife and their daughter.

JOHN BUSCEMA

Though primarily known for his long tenure as one of Marvel Comics' most prolific pencilers, John Buscema began his celebrated career at the age of 21 with Timely Comics. After Timely closed its in-house Bullpen, Buscema pursued comics work for a time before he left comics altogether for advertising in 1958.

When he returned to comics, however, he did so with a vengeance. Stan Lee recruited him away from advertising and quickly ensconced him into the upper ranks of Marvel artists. Picking up where *Avengers* mainstay Don Heck left off, "Big John" began what would be one of the title's definitive artistic runs. The much-anticipated *Silver Surfer* series was launched with Buscema at the helm, and top-tier books like *Fantastic Four* and *Thor* were entrusted to his care after Jack Kirby left Marvel for DC Comics.

Buscema's bold, muscular artwork commanded the comic-book page with realistic figurework that represented the next evolutionary step in post-Kirby Marvel Comics style. The respect accorded him within Marvel as an artist's artist was of such renown that he literally wrote the book on drawing, composing *How To Draw Comics the Marvel Way* with Stan Lee, the classic "how to" book in comic-book illustration.

He worked from the '70s through the '90s on nearly every title in the Marvel stable, including his personal favorite, *Conan the Barbarian*, with Roy Thomas. He retired in 1996, but returned every now and then to the comics scene until he passed away after a battle with cancer in 2002, the same year he was inducted into the Eisner Hall of Fame.

RICH BUCKLER

Rich Buckler, along with John Buscema and George Pérez, helped define the '70s era of Marvel's flagship title, *Fantastic Four*. His dynamic style and muscular figurework carried on the tradition set by Jack Kirby. Buckler's first published artwork was a backup in King Feature's 1967 *Flash Gordon* #10, and in 1970 he landed work on Warren's *Eerie* and *Creepy* horror magazines. After illustrating a few backup stories at DC Comics, he turned to Marvel for his first feature work. By 1973, he was turned loose on *Fantastic Four* and other Marvel ongoing series like *Jungle Action* (featuring Black Panther) and *Astonishing Tales*, in which he and writer Doug Moench launched Deathlok the Demolisher. The post-apocalyptic story of Col. Luther Manning, their run on "Deathlok" was a defining vision of a future gone wrong. Its influence and themes of military rule, reanimation and killer cyborgs would be reflected in films from *The Terminator* to *RoboCop*. After a time with DC, where he teamed with Roy Thomas on *All-Star Squadron*, Buckler returned to Marvel for work on *Spectacular Spider-Man*, *New Mutants* and a return engagement with *Fantastic Four* in the late '90s when he collaborated with writers such as Steve Englehart and Walt Simonson. He has a thriving career outside comics as a surrealist painter.

SAL BUSCEMA

Without a doubt one of comics' most prolific artists, "Our Pal" Sal Buscema joined Marvel in 1968 shortly after his elder brother, John. Tackling inking duties on *Silver Surfer* and *Fantastic Four*, including the all-time classic *Silver Surfer* #4, Buscema quickly graduated to penciling. He was an anchor of the Marvel line in the 1970s with long runs on books like *Captain America*, *Marvel Team-Up* and *The Spectacular Spider-Man* and a 100-plus issue run on *The Incredible Hulk*. Buscema was also behind defining the tone on early issues of *The Defenders*, *Rom* and *The New Mutants*. His career as one of Marvel's most versatile artists lasted throughout the '70s and into the '90s. In 1988, he returned to *The Spectacular Spider-Man* and over the next ten years penciled every issue but two from #134 through #238 (and inked the vast majority as

well!) Although he retired in the late '90s, readers can still see his name on comics credits from time to time, including inking work on the cult hit *Spider-Girl*.

BILL MANTLO

From the mid-'70s through the late-'80s, Bill Mantlo established himself as one of the most dedicated writers in the comics industry, writing hundreds of stories across dozens of titles, primarily for Marvel Comics.

Mantlo broke into comics as a colorist, but it wasn't long before he was given a crack at writing a fill-in story, a "Sons of the Tiger" story in the black-and-white *Deadly Hands of Kung Fu* magazine, and his true comics talent began to emerge. The quality of his work led to his installation as that book's regular writer, a tenure that included the notable achievement of introducing comics' first Puerto Rican hero, the White Tiger.

After achieving notoriety within the Marvel offices as a guy who could knock out credible fill-in scripts at a moment's notice, Mantlo was given more regular work. One early highlight was his 20-issue tenure on *Iron Man* that began the Golden Avenger's return to prominence. As one might expect from someone with such a volume of work, Mantlo was game to take on projects others dismissed, and he did it with an unfeigned aplomb that elevated the work.

It was on two licensed titles that Mantlo built his legacy. Inspired by a toy given to his son at Christmas, Mantlo lobbied Marvel to adapt Micronauts into an ongoing series. The award-winning epic he spun with artistic luminaries like Michael Golden and Pat Broderick is still highly revered by comics fandom as is his even longer run on *Rom*, wherein he developed a universe filled with Spaceknights, Dire Wraith monsters and outer space intrigue. Other notable credits in Mantlo's career include *Incredible Hulk*, *Alpha Flight* and *Spectacular Spider-Man*.

Just as Mantlo had begun a new career as a public defender with the New York City Legal Aid Society, he was struck by a hit-and-run driver and went into a weeks-long coma from severe head trauma. He has since been under constant medical care. The comics community has led multiple fundraisers to aid in the continuing care of a talented writer who is missed by his many fans.

ROY THOMAS

Along with fellow fan Jerry Bails, Roy Thomas developed the first known organized comic fandom in the pages of *Alter Ego*, a self-published fanzine. Leaving his teaching position in 1965, Roy took his deep knowledge of comics characters and their history and moved to New York City, accepting a job under DC Comics editor Mort Weisinger. His stay lasted little over a week before he opted for a position at Marvel, where under Stan Lee, his duties quickly matured from proofreading to more serious work as an editorial assistant and writer.

Titles as disparate as *Modeling With Millie*, *Kid Colt* and *Sgt. Fury* were written under his auspices before he was able to fulfill his desire to write super-hero stories on Iron Man in *Tales of Suspense* #73 and a pair of Dr. Strange stories for *Strange Tales*.

Stan must have liked what he was reading, because after this seeming trial period, Roy "The Boy" (as he was called in credits) was given both *Sgt. Fury* and *The X-Men*. Along with artist Werner Roth, Thomas took the X-Men on adventures around the world and told the characters' pre-X-Men origins. In addition to introducing Banshee, Sunfire and Havok, Thomas' X-Men credits also include his watershed collaboration with artist Neal Adams.

Proving his mettle on *X-Men* led him to *The Avengers*, and it was with this team that Roy really started crafting his legacy. Across 70 consecutive issues of Earth's Mightiest Heroes, he became perhaps the title's definitive writer, introducing characters such as the Vision and penning classic sagas including the "Kree/Skrull War." Before the '60s ended, Thomas chalked up noteworthy runs as writer of *Doctor Strange*, *Sub-Mariner*, *Captain Marvel* and more.

In the '70s, Thomas' influence at Marvel widened to include the first adaptation of Robert E. Howard's *Conan the Barbarian*, a reinvention of Adam Warlock, and a new super-team, The Defenders. By 1972 Roy was selected to succeed Stan Lee as editor in chief. His tenure as EIC lasted for over two years before he returned to his writer/editor role on *Fantastic Four*, *Thor*, *Savage Sword of Conan*, *What If...?* and *The Invaders*.

In 1980, he left the House of Ideas for DC to pursue a lifelong dream by reviving the Justice Society of America in the pages of *All-Star Squadron*. He wrote many more comics for DC and Marvel over the next two decades and is still active today, writing comics, historical studies, adaptations of classic novels and publishing his award-winning *Alter Ego*. Thomas' career contributions were acknowledged with his induction into the Eisner Hall of Fame's 2011 class. He lives in South Carolina with his wife and collaborator, Dann, and an amazing menagerie of animals that must make the neighbors nervous.

GEORGE TUSKA

His first art lesson was in a hospital bed, a teenager laid low by an appendectomy with nothing to do but draw cowboys and Indians under the tutelage of a fellow patient. But a decade later, George Tuska hit the ground running as part of the famed Eisner/Iger studio, beginning his career in comics. After early success drawing strips like "Spike Marlin" and "Shark Brodie," Tuska departed from Eisner/Iger and the company of fellow artists like Lou Fine and Bob Powell to join Harry "A" Chesler's art studio, where he would draw his first pages of Captain Marvel in *Master Comics* and *Captain Marvel Adventures*.

By the age of 24, Tuska had gone back and forth between Eisner/Iger (where he drew some of Eisner's iconic *Spirit* strips) and Fawcett, and after a stint in World War II, he settled into a run with Lev Gleason on *Crime Does Not Pay* and also worked on various newspaper strips.

As the '50s concluded, he was well entrenched as artist on *Buck Rogers* dailies and Sundays, but he would return to comic books by joining Marvel in a big way in 1968. With *Iron Man* #5, he established himself as regular artist for a two-year stint, helping anchor the identity of the Armored Avenger. After a year away, he would again return to *Iron Man* many times over the rest of the '70s, drawing it along with other Marvel titles like *Hero For Hire*, *Ghost Rider* and *Black Goliath*. In addition to taking on the daily *Superman* strip in 1978, he also worked steadily with DC through the '70s on many of their books. Retiring after a long and solid career as a cartoonist in 1993, Tuska continued to draw commissions for his many fans until his 2009 death at the age of 93.

Biographies researched and written by John Rhett Thomas

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THE MARVEL AGE

It was August 1961 and change was hitting the newsstands. *Fantastic Four* #1 did not feature the squeaky-clean heroes of yesteryear. These were real characters placed in extraordinary circumstances. They lived together, they fought among themselves—and sometimes, they even lost to the bad guys. This was more than a change in attitude: It was the beginning of something entirely different—the Marvel Age of Comics!

Thanks to the fertile imaginations of Stan Lee, Jack Kirby, Steve Ditko and others, an unending list of heroes followed the FF with ever-increasing acclaim and popularity: the Amazing Spider-Man, the Mighty Thor, the Incredible Hulk, Daredevil, Iron Man and the X-Men, to name but a few. These were the Marvel heroes, born of conflict and a continuous struggle to balance human lives with superhuman responsibilities.

The *Marvel Masterworks* series was created to give comic-book readers everywhere the chance to experience the greatest comics the world has known as they were originally presented.

THE GOLDEN AGE

As the Great Depression wore on and the specter of war hung over the heads of all Americans, a new entertaining escape from the newspapers' horrifying realities was born: the comic book. Within their four-color pages, larger-than-life super heroes could make short work of America's foes, giving readers of all ages hope for victory against the real-life enemies that faced the United States.

At the forefront of this new medium was Timely Comics, a young company staffed by such legendary talents as Carl Burgos, Bill Everett, Joe Simon, Jack Kirby and Stan Lee. These skilled writers and artists created a vast array of characters that would give rise to the Marvel Universe!

GOLDEN AGE ALL-WINNERS VOLS. 1-4
GOLDEN AGE CAPTAIN AMERICA VOLS. 1-6
GOLDEN AGE DARING MYSTERY VOLS. 1-2
GOLDEN AGE HUMAN TORCH VOLS. 1-3
GOLDEN AGE MARVEL COMICS VOLS. 1-7
GOLDEN AGE MYSTIC COMICS VOL. 1
GOLDEN AGE SUB-MARINER VOLS. 1-3
GOLDEN AGE U.S.A. COMICS VOLS. 1-2
GOLDEN AGE YOUNG ALLIES VOLS. 1-2

THE ATLAS ERA

Seeing super heroes waning, Timely Comics evolved into Atlas Comics and took on a vast new range of genres: science-fiction tales of outer space adventures and unimaginable monsters; realistic war comics; buxom jungle heroines; horror comics that would become the center of a moral panic that rocked the industry; and romance comics for the emerging teen audience. Even the classic costumed heroes of the '40s retooled to take on the threat of Communism. From Western gunfighters to crime to horror, Atlas had it all!

ATLAS ERA BATTLEFIELD VOL. 1
ATLAS ERA BLACK KNIGHT/YELLOW CLAW VOL. 1
ATLAS ERA HEROES VOLS. 1-3
ATLAS ERA JOURNEY INTO MYSTERY VOLS. 1-4
ATLAS ERA JUNGLE ADVENTURE VOLS. 1-3
ATLAS ERA MENACE VOL. 1
ATLAS ERA STRANGE TALES VOLS. 1-6
ATLAS ERA TALES TO ASTONISH VOLS. 1-4
ATLAS ERA TALES OF SUSPENSE VOLS. 1-4
ATLAS ERA VENUS VOL. 1

MARVEL COMICS GROUP
THE MIGHTY
THOR
THE BATTLE YOU'VE BEEN AWAITING FOR! THE WORLD WIDE BATTLE BETWEEN ASGARD AND EARTH!
AND THE THUNDER GOD IS CAUGHT IN THE MIDDLE!

MARVEL COMICS GROUP
THE MIGHTY
THOR
RELEASE MY FATHER FROM THY GRANDFATHER'S HOUR, OR FACE THE WRATH OF THOR!
NAY, THUNDER-GOD! WITHOUT REGAL ODIN TO LEAD THEM THIS DAY--
CALL THE LEGIONS OF ODIN! ASGARD SHALL PERISH!
WHEN GODS MAKE WAR!

MARVEL COMICS GROUP
THE MIGHTY
THOR
TELL THE DEATH-GOD THAT SENT THEE--
THE GOD OF THUNDER SHALL TRIUMPH OVER ALL!
WHEN DEATH SAILS THE STARS!

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